

health care reforms that will give Americans more health care choices at a lower cost.

Finally, our budget will start the process of putting major entitlement programs such as Social Security and Medicare on a sounder footing going forward. Right now, the Social Security trust fund is headed toward bankruptcy. If we don't take action, Social Security recipients could be facing a 25-percent cut in benefits by the year 2033. Medicare faces similar challenges to those faced by Social Security. Under the worst-case scenario, the Medicare trust fund could become insolvent by as early as 2021. That is just 6 short years away. The Republican budget would help preserve Medicare by extending the trust fund's solvency for an additional 5 years, which would protect retirees' benefits while giving policymakers additional time to ensure that this program provides support to seniors for decades to come.

I am proud that today the Republicans in Congress will ensure that we have a joint balanced budget resolution for the first time in 14 years, but I also wish to emphasize that is no more than what the American people should expect. The American people, after all, have to live within a budget; their government needs to do so as well.

Going forward, balanced budgets need to be the norm here in Congress. Washington has spent enough time working for its own interests. It is time to get Washington working again for American families.

This is the first time in 14 years that we have actually had a budget resolution and a conference report that balance within 10 years. As I said earlier, during my time here in the Senate, which hasn't been that long but about 10 years now, this is the first time—with the exception of 2009, in which we did a budget simply so the Democrats could pass ObamaCare through reconciliation—this is the first time we have done a budget that passed both chambers in the 10 years I have been here, with the exception perhaps of the first few years.

It is time to get Washington working again for the American people. It starts with passing the budget. That is why I am proud that Senator ENZI and others worked hard to get us where we are. I hope today we will ultimately have the votes necessary to pass this and do something which hasn't been done around here in a very long time but which is really essential for the good of the American people in this country.

RECESS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess until 2:15 p.m. today for the weekly conference meetings and that the time during the recess count against the majority time on the budget conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:51 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET, FISCAL YEAR 2016—CONFERENCE REPORT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that time under any quorum call be equally divided between the two sides.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ENZI. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise today to speak in opposition to the Republican so-called budget. I call it a "so-called budget" because I do not believe even Republicans would actually pass appropriations consistent with it. It looks to me like it is just a show to keep extremists on the right happy. My guess is that practical Republicans cannot wait for President Obama to bail them out by negotiating appropriations higher.

Recently, we have seen impressive examples of committee bipartisanship. In Foreign Relations, Senator CORKER brought a unanimously bipartisan Iran resolution out of the poisonous turmoil surrounding that issue. In the HELP Committee, Senator ALEXANDER brought a unanimously bipartisan education bill out of committee on an issue that has long been contested. Even the intensely divided Environment and Public Works Committee brought out a chemical regulation bill with a strong bipartisan majority. But Budget? No chance.

Instead of working with Democrats on a real budget, Republicans produced a partisan ideological showcase. They cut programs for seniors, for low-income families, and for other vulnerable citizens and protected the wealthiest Americans from contributing even one dime in deficit reduction.

As we have seen in the past, Republicans care about deficit reduction only when it involves cutting programs for people who need help. But can they find a single tax loophole to cut? Not one.

This budget follows the Ryan budget off the cliff of shielding every single

subsidy and giveaway in the Tax Code. No special interest tax loophole is too grotesque for them. Big Oil tax subsidies, special low rates for hedge fund managers, private jet depreciation, for goodness' sake—tax giveaways that amount to nothing more than taxpayer subsidies for the wealthy and well connected—this budget loves and protects them all.

Not only do the Republicans protect every tax loophole, they propose eliminating the estate tax—a tax that only affects families worth over \$10 million—the top 0.2 percent. You may have heard a lot about the 1 percent. Well, this budget does even better than that. It confers a great, wonderful, fat favor on the top 0.2 percent and, at the same time, the budget will allow the taxes to increase on 13 million lower- and middle-income households—households with 25 million children. That is a \$300 billion tax giveaway to that 0.2 percent—to basically 5,000-some of the wealthiest families in America. And that big gift to those 5,000-and-some wealthiest families is paired with a tax hike for millions of families who are just getting by.

And, of course, it is lower-income and middle-class families who would suffer the most from the Republican spending cuts. Medicaid, food stamps, Pell grants, and job training all get axed. They hand Medicare over to private sector vouchers and kick 16 million Americans off of health insurance plans they obtained through the Affordable Care Act.

Today, across this Capitol, breast cancer advocates are asking for our support for investment to help cure that deadly disease. This budget cuts research for breast cancer and other deadly diseases. It slashes funding for nursing homes, including those that care for seniors with Alzheimer's. It even supports a 20-percent across-the-board benefit cut for disabled Americans—a 20-percent benefit cut for disabled Americans—by doubling down on the senseless House rule that can be used to create an artificial crisis and prevent a routine Social Security fix.

As for the investments that keep our Nation competitive in an increasingly global economy, all are attacked. From scientific research to education to infrastructure, the Republicans offer a radical plan of cuts.

In a nutshell, their behavior proves that the deficit is just a pretext for them to cut programs that Republicans have always opposed—programs that create jobs, support the middle class, and offer lifelines to the most vulnerable Americans.

Even transportation infrastructure—our roads and bridges—gets whacked. Much of our highway system dates back to the 1950s, and roads and bridges across the country are in dire need of repair and replacement. This budget fails to provide any new funding for infrastructure. It does not even ensure that current funding levels will be maintained.

This matters because the current funding authorization for highway and transit projects expires at the end of the month. That will imperil construction projects and jobs just as we enter the busy summer highway construction season. There is no plan to deal with that that Republicans have announced—no bill in any committee.

In the budget, Republicans had an opportunity for a big win-win. They could have upgraded America's roads and bridges and supported millions of jobs. Ranking Member SANDERS even offered an amendment that would have paid for infrastructure investments by closing some of these corporate tax loopholes. All Republicans had to do was vote yes. But corporate tax loopholes were too important, and roads and bridges did not matter. They chose to protect their cherished tax giveaways for special interests. Today the clock still ticks toward a looming highway jobs shutdown.

This will hurt a lot of States. It will particularly hurt my home State of Rhode Island. We are a historic and densely populated State. We have aging and heavily used infrastructure. Lots of our roads and bridges are in poor condition. One study found that the average motorist in Rhode Island pays an extra \$637 per year for car repairs and operating costs because of potholes and bumps and other bad road conditions. It is not just Rhode Island. This is true also across the country. Nationwide, poor road conditions are estimated to cost our country more than \$100 billion a year—over \$500 per motorist. The American Society of Civil Engineers gives America's bridges a grade of only C-plus. It gives our roads a D.

Where is the plan to address this? Where is the plan to help the working Americans who have to spend \$500 or \$637 a year because we do not take care of our roads and highways? There is none.

Well, I understand that the Republicans in the Senate have been in the minority for a long time and old habits die hard. But the responsibility of a majority is to be responsible. Republicans passed up the opportunity to be responsible in their budget with highway funding. This should not be that difficult. They could start by looking at the bipartisan 6-year highway bill approved last year in the Environment and Public Works Committee. My recollection is that it was approved unanimously. That bill would have provided the certainty that our State departments of transportation need to plan for the big multiyear, job-creating projects that our years of deferred maintenance have brought due.

The extremist Republican budget under the Senate rules does not need Democratic support, and it appears that the Republicans do not even want Democratic support. Under the Senate rules, this budget will pass this Chamber. The good news about that is that the budget is merely political theater. The penalty for violating this budget is

a 60-vote point of order. Nowadays it takes 60 votes to pass an appropriations bill. So in effect the penalty is a nullity. So there is really nothing to violating the budget.

The real budget will be sent to us through the Appropriations Committee, and the real numbers will be negotiated upwards, and the Republicans will be relieved of the human responsibility for what would happen if this budget were actually to guide our appropriations. That is the good news.

The bad news is that it is a missed opportunity to try to work in any kind of a bipartisan fashion. It is a missed opportunity to address issues that Americans agree on, such as maintaining our bridges and highways.

I hope very much that my friends on the other side of the aisle will begin to work with Democrats on addressing, with some semblance of bipartisanship, our constituents' needs in that regard. With funding set to expire in just a few weeks, and with no Republican plan on the horizon to address it, we should at least begin with a bipartisan conversation about a long-term highway bill.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENZI). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise as we are talking about the budget, and I want to talk a little bit about that today, being a member of the Budget Committee and someone very concerned about the fiscal direction of our country. I also want to talk about a trip I took to Israel. Over the last weekend, I was in Israel having meetings with Prime Minister Netanyahu, members of the Knesset, the Minister of Intelligence, the Deputy Foreign Minister, and others, and part of what I want to talk about in the budget relates to that.

This budget, by the way, is the first time in 6 years that we have had the ability for the House and Senate to come together and have a congressional budget. During that 6 years, by the way, I think there has been \$8 trillion added to the national debt. During that 6 years, there has not been adequate oversight of the departments and agencies of government, partly because there hasn't been a budget. Without a budget, it is very difficult to go through the appropriations process, which means that not only has spending been high—more money being spent than coming in, in terms of revenue year after year to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars—but also we haven't had the ability to have the appropriate checks and balances, oversight of the various agencies we have in the appropriations process.

So, after 6 years, it is about time. My constituents, when I say it is the first time in 6 years we have been able to pass a budget, they say, well, what took you so long. Why is it that I have to have a budget in my family, have to have a budget in my business and in our community, the county, and the State, and Congress can't get its act together? So we are, this afternoon, I believe, going to pass this budget, and it does provide this framework for going forward.

What is that framework? Well, it is a balanced budget over 10 years. Although it is the first time Congress would come together in 6 years to have a budget, it is actually the first time since 2001 that there has been a budget that gets to balance that is presented and passed by this Congress. That is important.

Earlier, one of my colleagues was talking about everything that was cut by this budget. Actually, those decisions are going to be made by the Appropriations Committee. That is appropriate. They are the committee responsible for defending every dime. Congress has that responsibility. They are the ones who should look at the priorities. They are the ones who should decide which program is working and which one is not working, which ones should get less money, which ones should get more money, which ones should be reformed and changed. That is the process we are going to be undertaking, and it is exactly what we are hired to do.

Is it an easy vote? No. Yet we see this afternoon we will get the necessary 51 votes to pass this budget and begin to move the country forward. It not only balances the budget in 10 years, it does it without raising taxes. It does it in a way that actually strengthens Medicare, protects Social Security, supports a healthier and stronger economy that we need in this country.

We just had the economic growth numbers come out for the first quarter and, boy, are they disappointing—0.2 percent. We just had some weak numbers in terms of jobs numbers last month. We have to do better. We can and should do better. Part of it starts with better policies here in Washington, DC. We need policies that encourage people to get out there and work hard, take a risk, and let people know that if they do play by the rules and work hard, they can get ahead. There is so much more we can do with tax reform and regulatory relief and coming up with smart ways to deal with health care. That is what this budget does, by the way.

It also improves the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of government. This is very important. It has a particular provision that I feel strongly about, as the Presiding Officer knows. He has done a great job of shepherding us through the Budget Committee to make sure we could have the information on the floor of the Senate to decide the best tax reform to pursue.

We will now have not just what is called the static analysis but also an analysis, that takes into account that tax policy does change people's behavior. We all know that—everybody knows that—but we haven't had that information until now. This macroeconomic scoring of a tax provision is going to make it more likely to come up with good tax reform that will help give this economy the shot in the arm it needs to get moving.

I am pleased with the fact that we are finally going to move forward on a budget. It is discouraging that it took this long—6 years—but with the Republican majority we committed to do this, and I am very pleased that this afternoon we are going to finally see, for the hard-working taxpayers whom I represent, the opportunity to actually have a budget around here and to get individual appropriations bills done.

One other part of the budget that relates to the trip I just took is our defense spending. The budget helps to provide more avenues for increasing defense where needed, and in this dangerous world in which we live, we do have to ensure that we have a strong defense that is up to the challenges we face.

ISRAEL

Mr. President, I just returned from a trip to Israel, where I had very productive meetings with Prime Minister Netanyahu, with the Secretaries, the Ministers of Intelligence, the Deputy Foreign Minister, other Israeli officials, as well as our Ambassador over there and his team.

The reason for going to Israel was the same as with the previous visits; that is, to learn firsthand from those on the ground about the best way forward in a very volatile and dangerous region of the world, to show support for our ally Israel and, finally, to report back to my Ohio constituents and to the Senate as we face these challenging issues we have in the region. I saw when I was there, again, how since its independence in 1948, the people of Israel have not only learned how to survive, how to make do in sometimes a very unforgiving strategic and natural environment, but have also learned how to thrive.

They boast the region's most dynamic economy now. It is also the region's most vibrant democracy, with an open society that promotes the values of freedom, tolerance, and equality. It is a small population. They have very little land and very few natural resources, and they are faced with aggression from all sides. Throughout its history, Israel has faced these challenges through both the power of the head and the heart—knowledge, innovation, grit, and determination—to build and defend the world's one and only Jewish State and the one democracy in the region.

It is against this general backdrop that I wanted to talk to the Prime Minister and other leaders about some really important topics that we face in

the Senate; one is the ongoing nuclear talks and how to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, as well as how to address Iran's current aggression all throughout the region.

Second, I wanted to talk about the insidious campaign going on around the world. It is a campaign to delegitimize Israel through boycotts, divestments, and sanctions. I have been involved in this for years. Ten years ago, I worked on this as the U.S. Trade Representative. Most recently, I joined Senator BEN CARDIN in a bipartisan effort that was successful in adding an amendment to the trade bill that is working its way through the system, to tell our trading partners you cannot boycott, divest, and sanction Israel if you want to do business with us.

Third, I want to talk about the myriad of challenges that face this region and the destabilizing of it right now: ISIS, the civil war in Syria, the immediate challenges Israel faces with the terrorist activities of Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon and in Syria.

Finally, I wanted to talk about the Israel-Palestinian dialogue, the opportunity for peace and a two-state solution.

Of all these threats, I suppose Israel's greatest threat lies in Iran. Iran has been described, by the way, as a regime that is the No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism in the world. Let's remember that, remember whom we are dealing with. This has been true since 1984, when they put Iran on the terrorist list. I think there are only four countries on it, and one is Cuba, that I am sure the administration would like to remove from that list. So this is a small list of countries.

According to the administration, the Iranian regime is able to produce enough material for a nuclear weapon in sometime between 3 months and 1 year, depending on which testimony you hear from the administration. They also acknowledge that it supports terrorist groups such as Hezbollah. It funds other Shiite militias as it seeks regional dominance in Iraq. We have seen this in Yemen most recently, but also in Syria and elsewhere. They also have supported a Sunni group, Hamas, as they lobbed rockets into Israel. Many of those rockets have been provided, apparently, through Iran. Of course, we should not forget that this behavior comes from a regime that has pledged to "annihilate," "destroy," and "wipe Israel off the map."

Like many of my colleagues in the Senate, I have serious concerns about the framework of the nuclear agreement and what may follow in a comprehensive deal. Given the importance of this issue, I feel strongly that Congress should play a role in analyzing any agreement and approving or disapproving it. Our negotiating objective, in my view, should be an enforceable agreement; one that contains concrete and verifiable steps to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons capability.

For years, the international community demanded that Iran dismantle its nuclear program—most notably by halting all enrichment activity. If you look at the U.N. resolution and the activity around that, it is pretty strong language. From what we know, it appears that the so-called framework agreement is still a great distance from that. I hope that can be improved. We are looking at a model of an agreement that aims to freeze the nuclear program but somehow doesn't dismantle it. I certainly would have preferred the dismantlement model, and with the tough sanctions we put in place, I had hoped that was doable. But given where we are and given Israel's expertise and focus, I wanted to learn more about why the Israelis think the framework agreement is inadequate and whether it can be turned into a better agreement.

There are many important questions that remain, and sadly only a few of them have satisfactory answers in the current framework agreement. In fact, the Iranian version and the U.S. version of the text seem to differ on some of the key details. If you hear from them, they say one thing and we say another. In particular, I returned from this trip continuing my focus on what I think is perhaps the most important issue of all, which is the sanctions relief. The U.S. Congress put these sanctions in place, encouraging the administration. If we give the Iranian regime sanctions relief on day one before they have kept their word on any deal, we will be contributing a cash windfall to Iran's ongoing efforts to further destabilize an ever-growing list of countries—think about it—Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Yemen, and so on. Whether it is sanctions relief or whether it is releasing frozen oil revenues in banks that are all around the world, getting the proceeds from sales of oil that are now frozen in banks, if that becomes something the Iranians can use, that kind of financial relief would be a step to fuel war, not peace.

So these are the right areas to focus on when it comes to Iran, not just for Israel's sake, of course, but for the sake of peace and stability in the region and for our sake, our national security, and the world's sake.

I am hopeful we can pass the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act and safeguard Congress's role. I hope we can move to a bipartisan consensus on the floor of the Senate. But what constitutes a good deal? I believe consensus could provide a measuring stick to determine what kind of an agreement would produce a lasting peace and also provide the administration some leverage, give them some leverage to be able to negotiate a more effective agreement by having that debate on the floor of the Senate.

Attacks on Israel, of course, don't always come from rockets, missiles, or other violent means. Increasingly, opponents of Israel are using economic weapons to target Israel. The boycott,

divestment, and sanctions movement—also called BDS—is an effort to undermine Israel's sovereignty and further isolate it from the international community, really delegitimize the state.

Senator CARDIN and I recently authored the United States-Israel Trade Enhancement Act of 2015. It has a very simple purpose. It says that the United States will leverage trade to stop efforts to delegitimize Israel, especially when, as I look at it, having just been there, some of these BDS efforts actually harm the Palestinians in the West Bank, whom I think some of these efforts are meant to help.

Our legislation leverages ongoing trade negotiations to discourage our trading partners from engaging in this economic discrimination. I have seen how it works. I know trade can be effective. We did this with Oman when I was in the U.S. Trade Representative's office, as they wanted to negotiate a trade agreement, and the same with Bahrain. Both of those agreements ended up removing their boycotts of Israel. I talked with Saudi Arabia when I negotiated for their accession to the WTO, where again we were able to make progress in providing, in that case, equal treatment to Israel.

I am very proud that the Cardin-Portman amendment was the first and one of only three amendments to pass out of the Finance Committee when we took up the trade promotion authority bill.

In my meetings with U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro, the Foreign Ministry, Israeli national security officials, and in my discussions with the Prime Minister, I gained some additional insight into how BDS actually works in practice, and I came home more resolved than ever to work in a bipartisan way to ensure that we don't have this discrimination and painfully obvious double standard with Israel. For instance, its advocates only insist on isolation and penalties for Israel—not other countries—over territorial disputes and turn a blind eye to other territorial disputes around the world.

Finally, I talked to officials at length about general turmoil in the Middle East and Israel's relationship with its neighbors. This deteriorating regional security environment includes Egypt's battle against Hamas and radicalism in the Sinai, the brutal civil war in Syria, the destabilizing role of Iran-backed Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon and Syria, threats and challenges to our ally Jordan, the brutality of ISIS, and the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

So I returned from my trip with my concerns reinforced over the threats to the region, but I also returned with hope because whether I was touching the ancient stones of the Western Wall, walking the Stations of the Cross in the Old City, amidst the Old City Market, standing amidst the worshipers in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, or marveling at the modern hustle and bustle of Tel Aviv, I saw a remarkable phenomenon up close.

A small but determined country that carries within its narrow borders the ancient wisdom of our great faith, the cutting-edge innovations, and the can-do spirit of the modern State of Israel—all of this combines to bring me back to this floor with a greater resolve to meet the challenges we talked about today for our own national security but also for that of our steadfast ally, Israel.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, what is the business pending before the Senate?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The conference report to accompany S. Con. Res. 11, with 10 hours of debate equally divided.

Mr. DURBIN. On the budget.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On the budget.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I hope some of the comments I make in reference to this product are not taken personally.

I thank the Presiding Officer for all the work he has put into the budget and for his friendship and cooperation on so many different issues.

What is this budget all about? A budget is really like a blueprint. It really says what we want to do and spend in the next fiscal year that starts October 1. As a result of passing a budget, we send a message to the spending committees and tell them how much to spend in different areas. The budget tries to spell out not only the amounts but also the policy we are to follow when we pass these spending bills. It is really a pretty small document by Federal standards, but it really packs a lot of wallop when it comes to what we are going to be doing for the next several months.

Budgets make choices, just as our family budgets make a choice. Can we afford a new car? Is it time to move? Can we remodel the kitchen? Can we pay for the kids to go to college? These are family budget decisions that are made that really impact the lives of members of the family. Just as those decisions impact lives, so does this, in a large way, for over 300 million Americans.

Sadly, from my perspective—and I have great respect for the Senator from Wyoming, who serves as the Senate Budget Committee chairman—from my perspective, this budget has the wrong priorities. Let me tell you why.

Many times, you are going to hear speeches given on the floor of the Senate about how the government should not pick winners and losers. I have heard that so many times. It basically says: Let's leave it to the free market forces and other forces. Government shouldn't pick winners and losers.

This budget being offered to the Senate picks winners and losers, and we can almost identify those winners by name because what this budget does is

it eliminates the Federal estate tax. The Federal estate tax in this circumstance—changes that are called for, reforms in it, will result in tax breaks for the wealthiest people in America. Roughly 4,000 people a year will be spared, if their estates are worth more than \$10 million, from paying the estate tax. For these individuals who are that wealthy, it means a \$3 million tax break. When you add it up over a 10-year period of time, 4,000 people per year, it comes out to \$268 billion. So the wealthiest people in America are declared the winners in the Senate Republican budget.

Who are the losers? The losers are 16 million Americans who will find that they don't have the benefits of the EITC tax credit, as well as the child tax credit that has been proposed. For 16 million Americans, we cut back tax credits which they can use to build and sustain their families in order to give tax breaks to 4,000 people a year who have an estate worth more than \$10 million.

We haven't ignored the estate tax. In fact, we substantially reformed it. We indexed it. We made a lot of changes to it. But the Republican budget said we haven't gone far enough. We still have 4,000 people who are so rich that they are going to pay the tax, and this budget says it is time for that to end. I think they are wrong.

In order to deal with reducing the budget deficit, let me tell you where this Republican budget turns. All of us are aware of the fact that student loan debt now is the largest debt in America other than mortgage debt. There is more student loan debt in America than credit card debt. Think about that for a second.

Millions of students are deep in debt and carrying that debt for year after year because higher education—colleges and universities—cost so much. Middle-income families can't afford to pay it. They haven't saved enough. So the kids and sometimes the family have to borrow the money to get it done.

What does this budget do for those student borrowers? First, it reduces the amount of money available in Pell grants. Pell grants are grants—not loans—given to low-income students at colleges and universities. That is money the students don't have to borrow because they come from low-income families. Well, in this bill, we have a 31-percent cut in Pell grant funding; it is about \$90 billion over 10 years. Eight million Americans are dependent on Pell grant funding in this current school year. They will find that there is less money available in grants—even though they are from low-income families—to go to college. So what is the alternative? Don't go to college or borrow more money. So the Republican approach to the student loan debt crisis is to decrease the grants and increase the debt of future students.

That isn't all. There is a provision that says: If you borrow money to go to

colleges and universities from the Federal Government, then your repayment of those government loans is going to be at least sensitive to your situation in life. In other words, you won't have to pay more than 10 percent of your income each year to pay off the student loan.

They eliminate it. That basically means these students are going to have to pay higher amounts of their earnings on their student loans. Is that a problem? It is a big problem. It is a problem for those fresh out of colleges and universities who want to start their lives. How are they going to start their lives and take the jobs they want and still pay off the student loans? Students are making decisions now about where they go to work and what they do with their lives because of the debt they carry with them out of colleges and universities. The Republican budget before us today makes it more difficult for those students by reducing the Pell grants and increasing the payback cost on student loans.

They do something else for students, too. The Affordable Care Act, which some call ObamaCare, said: If you graduate from college, you can stay on your parents' health insurance plan until age 26. Is that important? Boy, it was in our family.

I can remember when my daughter graduated from college, and I said: Jennifer, do you have health insurance?

She said: Dad, I don't need it. I feel fine.

Really?

Well, now, under the Affordable Care Act, my daughter and other kids can stay on their parents' health insurance plan. So what does the Republican budget do about that? It abolishes the Affordable Care Act. It abolishes that protection for families to keep their kids on their health insurance plans. How can that help families and kids fresh out of college? A lot of kids out of college are not finding jobs right away. They are doing internships. They are working part time. They can't afford health insurance. But they are on the family plan now because of ObamaCare—not according to the Republican budget; they want to get rid of it.

That isn't all. When you take a look at eliminating the Affordable Care Act—at this point, we have 16 million Americans who have the benefit of health insurance because of ObamaCare, and they eliminate it over a period of time. And we believe that number will grow to 27 million Americans who, because of the Republican budget, will not have the opportunity to get health insurance.

They cut back on Medicaid eligibility. Medicaid, of course, is health insurance for those in low-income situations. What will happen to those people? I wonder if the Budget Committee sat down, took a look, and said: Well, what is going to happen if people lose their health insurance, 27 million Americans? It would be naive to say

that they just won't get sick. We know they will, and it will go back to the old days. In the old days, sick people who had no health insurance still showed up at the hospital. The hospital took care of them. The doctors took care of them. They were charity patients. Who paid for their care? All of us who have health insurance. I don't want to go back to the old days. I don't think America wants to. But this Republican budget does. It eliminates the Affordable Care Act.

I travel around Illinois and Chicago—I am honored to represent it—and I go to community health centers. They are popping up all over, in rural areas and cities as well, in neighborhoods. I want to say how proud I am that the Affordable Care Act created many of these centers. I have said, and I stand by it, that if I were sick or a member of my family were sick, I would be confident that if they walked into that center, that clinic, they would be treated to professional care. They are popping up all over the place. Elderly people now have someplace close to home to go to a clinic. Those who are on Medicaid—the health insurance from the government—can go in and be treated the same as anybody else.

What do we have in this bill when it comes to these health care clinics? This bill not only kicks 11 million people off Medicaid by taking away States' rights to expand health care to lower income residents, it cuts funding for community health centers by 70 percent—community health centers that are now serving 23 million Americans, which includes 7 million children and 250,000 veterans. How can we be better off by cutting back on the medical care in these health clinics? Do we think people won't get sick? Of course they will, and the cost will be shifted to others, just like the bad old days that we remember when health insurance premiums were going through the roof. But that is the proposal, and I think it is a serious mistake.

When I look at this Republican budget, I wonder if the Members who voted for it have really taken these ideas back home; if they have sat down with people and talked about what the impact will be when working families lose the tax credit of the ITC and child care. I wonder if they have considered what the impact will be by saying they want to perpetuate breaks in the Tax Code which reward companies for taking jobs overseas.

Isn't that the last thing we should be doing? Shouldn't the Tax Code be rewarding American companies that keep quality jobs in the United States, instead of shifting their mailing address to the Cayman Islands or someplace in Europe?

I think it is pretty clear: If you want to build a strong American economy, you stand by the best, most patriotic American corporations that keep people working in the United States. Yet that is not what this budget proposal does. We can do better.

I hope we defeat this budget resolution, and I hope we can then sit down and actually have a bipartisan conversation about the future of this country.

I think the future of this country includes a Tax Code that is fair to working families. I think it rewards American companies that create jobs in the United States. I don't think it gives 4,000 people a year, who happen to be the wealthiest people in America, a winning Power Ball ticket, as this budget proposal we have before us does.

I think we ought to expand the reach of health insurance, not reduce it. We want to give families a chance to be able to send their kids to college and kids not be so burdened with debt they can't chart their own futures. That is an optimistic, positive view of a growing America. This budget resolution is not.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this budget resolution and say to the Committee on the Budget that we can do better. If we are going to pick winners and losers, let's pick working families right here in America as the winners.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PORTMAN). The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I rise reluctantly against this budget resolution. I want to pick up exactly where our colleague from Illinois left off with respect to the values that are really important for this debate. As I look at this budget, I see opportunities missed that would bring the Senate together, help us find common ground, and particularly help the middle class.

The reality is there are tens of millions of people in Oregon and across America who day in and day out walk an economic tightrope, stretching every paycheck to the last penny. They want to climb the ladder of opportunity, they want to give their kids a brighter future, and the climb is not easy. My view is we ought to be trying to write a Federal budget that makes it easier for middle-class people to climb that ladder of opportunity and for those who aren't middle class to start moving up the rungs.

This legislation before us misses out on several bipartisan opportunities that reluctantly drive me to say the bill is flawed, because in too many instances, it leaves our working families, our middle class, behind.

Let me be specific. I offered, when the budget came up here, an amendment which stipulated that tax reform be built around the needs of our middle class so employers that would hire workers would have an opportunity to hire more, our workers would be able to get child care, and our students would be able to get educated. It was pretty straightforward. It said tax relief should be built around our middle class.

A number of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle asked if this would allow for some approaches that

they would be interested in. I said of course.

Chairman ENZI and I both have the honor to serve on the Senate Committee on Finance, so I offered an amendment that was built around some core ideas, recognizing my colleagues might have other approaches. A number of Republicans voted for that. It got more than 70 votes in the Senate.

Today, as we debate this legislation, we don't hear anything about tax relief for middle-class families. As I look at the budget, it sure looks to me, given some of the other priorities, as though there is a real prospect that taxes could go up for our middle-class families, as if they are not getting hammered hard enough. We could be working on a budget proposal today that creates new opportunity for middle-class people, a proposal that includes something such as what was voted on in the Senate that got more than 70 votes. Yet it is not there.

A second example deals with rural America. Again, in a lot of our rural communities there is enormous hurt. Many feel the policies of the Federal Government would pretty much turn them into some kind of economic sacrifice zone. So in the Committee on the Budget, I said: I think we have an opportunity to bring together programs such as the Secure Rural Schools Program, the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and we could adopt a smarter approach to fighting wildfires. The fact is that, too, was bipartisan. In the Committee on the Budget, the vote was 18 to 4—an overwhelming 18-to-4 bipartisan vote for the kind of approach I offered which would bring these programs together and put in the budget secure rural schools alongside these other programs that are a rural lifeline.

Once again, a bipartisan proposal—a bipartisan proposal that got resounding support in the Senate Committee on the Budget—somehow didn't make its way into the legislation we are considering today. So for communities in my home State, the message is: We are not really going to make your communities a priority.

I was just in, for example, Roseburg, OR, which is Southern Oregon, where there are hard-working people who would like to both get the timber harvest up and have the funds for their police and their schools and their roads and basic services. But this budget says that even though in the Committee on the Budget we had something bipartisan to help those communities, gee, we are really not going to follow through. We are just going to have a partisan plan, No. 1; and No. 2, we are going to basically shuffle to the side these bipartisan proposals with respect to middle-class tax relief and rural communities that, in my view, could make a huge difference in the quality of life for millions of American families. Of course, these were bipartisan ideas.

Now, a third area that has concerned me about this budget is the need for supporting programs such as Medicare and Social Security that keep millions of Americans from falling through the cracks. With this budget plan, the Congress ought to be protecting Medicaid so Americans of very limited means can count on having access to health care. Yet the budget that is being considered today would make, in my view, needlessly painful, needlessly arbitrary cuts.

It just seems as if the budget doesn't recognize that weakening Medicaid will hurt the most vulnerable families in Oregon and across the country—those who are struggling so hard to climb that ladder of opportunity. Without Medicaid coverage, those who are vulnerable end up forgoing checkups. They end up passing on the preventive visits. In my view, they will end up with lesser care at a higher overall cost. A massive burden would end up getting shifted to hospitals and doctors and many Americans who simply pay insurance premiums through their employer.

So if we make those kinds of cuts today—the cuts I have described as being arbitrary—we are going to have higher costs and more economic pain down the road.

Finally, millions of seniors and those with disabilities rely on Medicaid to help cover what otherwise can be crushing costs—crushing costs—in the long-term care area. I was codirector of the Oregon Gray Panthers for a number of years before I was elected to Congress, and what I have seen over the years are nursing home costs going up and up and up. Even those families who worked hard and saved and never took that extra vacation, never bought that special car ended up being impoverished, and they and those who are disabled simply would not be in a position to get long-term care without Medicaid.

Now, we know what used to happen years and years ago. There were poor farms, there were almshouses when savings ran out. It is pretty hard to do that with the demographic revolution of today, with 10,000 people turning 65 every day—10,000 people turning 65 every day for years and years to come.

So my view is Medicaid, this lifeline for the most vulnerable people—a lifeline that keeps so many individuals, particularly seniors, from falling into utter destitution—should be protected rather than filleted, as this budget would do, and it is one of the major reasons I am in opposition.

I will close by way of saying that I have gotten, over the years, to know Chairman ENZI very well. He is a compassionate legislator. He is a talented legislator. My hope is, though I oppose this budget today for the reasons I have described—the bipartisan opportunities missed with respect to tax relief for the middle class and the rejection of a bipartisan plan to help rural America—that in the days ahead, as we

go to the Committee on Finance, in particular, and we look at these issues, we can return to what has always been the Senate at its best, which is working in a bipartisan fashion. We can do it on tax relief. We can do it for rural America.

By the way, we can do it in terms of Medicare. We can protect the Medicare guarantee and hold down costs. Our colleague Senator ISAKSON from Georgia has joined me in an important piece of legislation that really starts to transform Medicare into a program that better meets the needs of those who will most need it, which is those with chronic disease—cancer, diabetes, stroke, and heart disease. But we would be protecting the Medicare guarantee, not, in effect, damaging Medicaid the way this budget would do.

Mr. President, I am going to yield the floor now and just state, once again, that I hope we can go back to what makes the Senate function at its best, bipartisanship. We missed that opportunity thus far, and I hope we will return to it.

With that, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Oregon for his kind comments, and I know, as the ranking member of the Committee on Finance, he will be doing a lot of things to see that things in this budget happen, and I suspect they will happen a lot the way they are here.

I would like to mention just a couple of things, though, for him to note because he mentioned the wildfire suppression. I know how passionate he and Senator CRAPO have been on wildfire suppression. I want him to note that section 3208 preserves the wildfire suppression funding.

One of the things that has always concerned me since I got here was that we have these emergencies for all sorts of things. When I first got here, they were \$5 billion a year; now they are up to \$7 billion a year. But any time you are budgeting and you know something is going to happen every year, it ought to be in the budget. So I put in \$7 billion for emergencies, and that will help to provide some of the funding for his suggestion of the wildfire suppression.

A couple of the other paragraphs the Senator from Oregon would be interested in are 4319 and 4320. We did not throw out everything. We did do some combining of ones that were very similar to make sure that in the 183 proposals we had for reserve funds, we could come up with a few fewer that would incorporate the ideas of everyone.

Some of the previous speeches mentioned what we were doing to Medicare. There aren't a lot of specifics on Medicare because, again, the Finance Committee—which Senator HATCH chairs and Senator WYDEN is the ranking member on—will have to make a lot of those actual decisions. In fact, almost everything that is in the budget requires some additional action, and that

additional action even has to be signed by the President. So if we are way off, it is not going to happen. But I am thinking there will be a lot of bipartisan action on this.

On Medicare itself, all we in the Senate did was go with the same Medicare cuts that the President suggested in his budget. We made one small change in that. We said those Medicare cuts, the money that will be saved in Medicare, has to stay with Medicare. That is a difference that we have with the President. When we did ObamaCare, there was \$714 billion worth of Medicare that was taken out and spent on other parts of the program. We could have done the doc fix back then really easily, but that was spent in other places.

One of the promises we made was that if there were some changes in Medicare—and there ought to be some changes in Medicare. Actually, the government ought to take a look at everything it does on a regular basis and do it better or, if it is not working, do without it. But Medicare does serve a need in this country, and the money that comes from Medicare ought to stay in Medicare but used in better places in Medicare, where it is more needed.

So I hope people will actually take a look at the document that is here.

Incidentally, on the Medicare proposal, the House came to the Senate proposal and eliminated a couple of things they had.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The clerk will call the roll. The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, if we look into this Senate's agenda this month, we will see right away why so many folks are frustrated with Washington. We have now been considering an Iran bill for the last 2 weeks. It has huge bipartisan support, but it is tied up with amendments designed to kill the bill.

Today, the House and Senate Republicans bring forth a budget which reflects some of the worst ideas from each Chamber. Back in March, I raised concerns that the Senate budget put the interests of a few ahead of the future of this country, and that is still true today. The majority insists on spending billions of dollars overseas, and continues the fiction that this spending somehow doesn't count towards the deficit.

Under this budget, every penny proposed in the overseas contingency operations account—that is \$187 billion—is going to be borrowed from China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and others. The majority once again favors tax breaks for the wealthiest among us over plans to strengthen the middle class—a mid-

dle class that has been the envy of the world. But under this blueprint, the \$2,500 tax credit that helps students with the cost of tuition disappears. The benefit under the child tax credit gets smaller, and American middle-class folks get squeezed. The majority continues to reward companies that ship jobs overseas instead of creating jobs right here in the United States. This budget drastically cuts and ends Medicare as we know it, and it opens up the door to the sale of our public lands.

Finally, this budget fails to invest in basic infrastructure. In fact, it actually calls for a cut of over \$200 billion in highway and transit funding over the next decade. The majority is pushing this proposal even though the highway bill funding expires on May 31, 2015. Now we are nearly out of time. In less than 4 weeks, just as millions of Americans will be getting on the road to enjoy summer vacations, road construction projects around this country will come to a screeching halt.

In my home State of Montana, the State department of transportation will delay nine projects this month due to Congress's failure to pass a long-term highway bill. Four projects that were scheduled to be awarded in April have been postponed to July and may be postponed indefinitely. Five more that were scheduled to be awarded next week will also be delayed. If Congress does another short-term extension, that list will get even longer. If we delay these projects even by a few weeks, we could miss the entire construction season in Montana, a northern-tier State. The snow will start falling, and the potholes will get bigger.

We already know that America's transportation infrastructure has been ignored for far too long. According to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, more than half of America's major roads and bridges are rated as poor to mediocre. In Montana, 40 percent of our roads are in need of repair or will need fixing soon. When our roads have potholes or can't handle the volume of cars and trucks, safety becomes an issue. Montana routinely leads the Nation in highway fatalities, and thousands of road fatalities each year are the result of bad road conditions.

As far as the economic impact, Federal highway dollars directly impact 11,000 jobs in Montana alone, not to mention the thousands of others who rely on roads for their businesses. These are jobs that cannot be outsourced. Each year, around \$60 billion in goods is shipped over Montana's 75,000 miles of roads and highways. That is true economic impact.

So instead of a long-term highway bill that allows States to plan and to get America moving, the next item the majority leader says he is going to take up is trade promotion authority. This will open the door for trade deals that the American public hasn't been allowed to see. While many in Washington see trade promotion as the key

to ensuring America's long-term economic viability, we need to make sure that the investments are made right here at home—smart investments.

After all, how are farmers in Montana going to get their crops to Asia if they cannot even get them down the road to the nearest grain elevator?

Our transportation infrastructure affects every industry. Take, for instance, Montana's outdoor economy. Millions of people come to Montana each year to hunt, fish, hike, and enjoy Montana's great outdoors—from Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks to our millions of acres of forest and public lands. Montana's outdoors brings in \$6 billion each year and supports some 60,000 jobs.

Passing a highway bill will increase folks' ability to access these outdoor places. But States which oversee these construction projects cannot wait until the end of the month to find out if Congress is going to do its job. Many of them are already pumping the brakes on projects until we step up and pass a highway infrastructure bill.

In the University District in Missoula, an important resurfacing project was scheduled to start next week after classes get out. But thanks to congressional inaction on the highway bill, that project will start no earlier than the third week in July—maybe not at all.

What does that mean? That means the project likely will not be done before students return and traffic in the University District increases exponentially. The Montana Department of Transportation has already announced it will push back the start-up date 3 months for a bridge replacement in Sanders County.

With one in five bridges being in desperate need of repair, delays on projects such as this are irresponsible and only add to the backlog. The need to act could not be more clear. While everyone knows we need a long-term solution, the American people have come to expect the worst from Congress—shortsighted, stopgap measures that will not give businesses or working families the certainty they need and deserve.

The House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee have put forth no solutions to this date. They are anxious to move the trade legislation that seems all too reminiscent of past trade deals—long on promises but short on jobs. Yet they will not produce a long-term highway bill that we know creates jobs here in America.

We must pass a long-term highway bill, and one that is paid for. But instead of working together on a long-term plan, Congress seems resigned to passing another short-term patch. This is shortsighted and we will have negative consequences for folks across this country.

The question I have for my colleagues is this. When did passing a highway bill become political? When

did basic investments in our Nation's infrastructure become this difficult? This is a no-brainer. Now we have folks in Congress who think roads build themselves. We have folks in Congress who eagerly swipe the Nation's credit card when it comes to investments in the Middle East. But these same Members of Congress will not even open up the wallet to fill a pothole next to a school in this country.

China will spend more than \$400 billion on transportation infrastructure this year. That is eight times more than the United States will spend on the highway trust fund. How do we expect to compete in a global economy if we are not willing to make the investment?

Infrastructure investments are investments in our economy, and they are investments in the future. If we can pass a long-term bill, it will pay for itself by giving businesses the certainty they need to grow, create jobs, and build the kind of economy that our kids and our grandkids deserve.

The clock is ticking, but the Senate is focused on the wrong priorities. It is time to refocus on making smart investments in our economy and being honest with the American people in our budgets. Right now we are doing neither.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to voice my opposition to this budget. Since being elected to the Senate, I have always stressed the importance of responsibly addressing our country's fiscal challenges. We have had bipartisan agreements before when we faced fiscal challenges. At the end of 2013, we passed the bipartisan Murray-Ryan budget agreement which then led to the passage of the omnibus spending bill. I was part of the group of 14 during the shutdown who came together with an idea for a fix that allowed us to get to the budget—seven Democrats and seven Republicans. We also saw some major bipartisan work on the farm bill, the Water Resources Development Act, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and we reauthorized the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program and, as well as we know, recently, the Medicare sustainable growth rate. But today that is not what this budget is about. That is one of my major focuses today.

I would say, by the way, as a result of some of the bipartisan work that has been done in the past, since 2009 we have seen the deficit as a percent of GDP drop from nearly 10 percent—9.8 percent, exactly—to under 3 percent.

In this economic recovery, we have seen 61 straight months of private sector job growth and added over 12 million private sector jobs. Unemployment is at 5.5 percent nationally and 3.7 percent in my home State of Minnesota. The unemployment rate went down faster in 2014 than it has in any year since 1984.

With this economy not just stabilized but finally starting to show some signs of improvement—not everything that we need, not with everyone sharing in its growth; we know that—we are no longer governing from crisis. We are finally governing from opportunity—opportunity for the people of this country, opportunity to compete in this global economy. My problem with this budget is that it does not give us that opportunity. This budget would make drastic cuts to the programs we need to seize this opportunity in the global economy, programs such as student loans, transportation, and heating assistance, just to name a few.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the deficit is projected to drop to 2.8 percent of GDP in 2015, a cut of nearly two-thirds. Yet this budget would cut many of the programs that help our middle-class people, our families, our seniors, and those working hard to make ends meet. We have heard about a lot of the cuts in programs, but I want to focus on three key areas that I believe we need to invest in today so we can seize this opportunity when we finally have a stable economy and our country can grow and compete. The first is infrastructure, the second is investing in kids, and the third is research.

One of the best ways to boost our economy and create good-paying jobs is through investing in infrastructure. For far too long we have neglected the roads, the bridges, and the mass transit that millions of Americans rely on every day. According to the Federal Highway Administration, more than 24 percent of the Nation's 600,000 bridges are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers' 2013 report card, the United States scores a D-plus on the overall condition of our Nation's infrastructure.

Compared with other countries, we are falling behind. China and India are spending, respectively, 9 percent and 8 percent of their GDPs on infrastructure. How much are we committing? Just 2 percent. The effects of this shortsighted strategy are increasingly clear. No one knows that better than in my home State of Minnesota, where on August 1, 2007, a major bridge—an eight-lane highway—went crashing into the Mississippi River, and 13 people died. Dozens and dozens were injured. Dozens of cars were submerged in the water. As I said that day, a bridge should not fall down in the middle of America—especially not an eight-lane interstate highway, especially not a bridge that is one of the most traveled bridges in our State, es-

pecially not a bridge that is blocks from my house, a bridge that my family goes over every day when we want to go anywhere in our State—rush hour in the heart of a major metropolitan area.

When we have something like that happen in the State, we understand the importance of investing in infrastructure. The last thing we want to see is more cuts. Whether it is roads, bridges, rail, airports or waterways, the need to rebuild our infrastructure is critical to reclaiming our country's competitive edge. We want to get goods to market in this export economy. How do we do it? We do it with roads, with bridges, with rail. We do it with locks and dams. We do it with airports. Yet this budget would cut transportation and infrastructure by more than \$200 billion over the next decade—a cut of 40 percent. That is simply unacceptable.

Education funding is something that is so important to me in my life. My grandpa worked 1,500 feet underground in the mines and never graduated from high school. He literally spent his life working, putting money in a coffee can in the basement to send my dad to community college. My dad went to community college and got a 2-year degree and then went on to the University of Minnesota—two public institutions. That is what education is about. Yet, we see cuts to education, cuts to Pell grants in this bill.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provides critical funding to help offset education costs for States and local areas that are providing services to kids with disabilities. We are talking about our most vulnerable kids here. Yet this budget would cut Federal education funding by 2 percent in 2017 and 9 percent in 2025. IDEA funding—that funding so critical for kids with disabilities—would be cut by more than \$15 million per year on average in Minnesota and more than \$950 million nationally. Our kids deserve better than that.

Medical research—no one knows that better than Minnesota, home of the Mayo Clinic, home of the University of Minnesota. Yet what do we see with this budget? The cuts would mean a devastating \$8 billion decrease at the National Institutes of Health over the next decade. This is simply unacceptable—cutting investment in medical innovation for cures that could cure Alzheimer's, for cures that could cure childhood diabetes, for cures and for research that could help people with autism; cutting investment in medical innovation is not a path that we can afford to take.

As Newt Gingrich said in an op-ed this last month, investing in health research is both a moral and a financial issue. The NIH is a beacon of hope for people across the Nation and in my home State of Minnesota. Just look at Alzheimer's. Right now, close to 5.2 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's, including nearly 100,000 Minnesotans. These numbers will grow dramatically in the many coming years

with the aging of the baby boomer generation. We know there is good research being done through the Human Genome Project and the work that is being done at Mayo, where, if we can catch it earlier, our doctors might be able to figure out exactly what works and does not work. If you do not catch it early, how are they ever going to do the research we need to do to figure out what works and what does not work if you wait too long?

That is some of the groundbreaking work that is being done right now. That is why I have worked with Senator DURBIN on legislation to boost NIH funding. In contrast to this budget, the American Cures Act, of which I am a cosponsor, would reverse the trend of declining Federal investment in medical research and fuel the next generation of biomedical discoveries by providing a 5-percent annual increase at NIH and at other key Federal research agencies.

We need to see this as an investment. We know how expensive Alzheimer's is—and we know the heartbreaking stories of families where a family member gets Alzheimer's. Yet we cannot back away from the research that is going on right now—the research for things such as precision medicine. We are going to have targeted treatments helping patients to live healthier lives.

In conclusion, this budget would make cuts to infrastructure at a time when we need to invest and rebuild. This budget would make cuts to programs that serve kids with disabilities and slow the process of biomedical research and innovation. We have an opportunity now in this country. Through the work of so many businesses and workers across the country, we have been able to stabilize this economy. People in our country did not give up. But now is the moment to seize opportunities, and seizing opportunities means really taking back our place in America as a preeminent researcher, as the country that people go to when they want to cure diseases. We cannot do that by moving backwards. We cannot do that if we are going to cut the funding for our roads and bridges. We cannot afford to have another I-35W bridge collapse.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this budget and work together on a smarter budget, one that actually allows this country—America—to seize the opportunity before us so we can compete in this global economy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the budget that is before the Senate, this combined House-Senate Republican budget. In evaluating this budget proposal, my core question has been this: Is this a budget that works for working America? Or is this a budget designed for powerful special interests and for those best off in our society? A budget is not just about the numbers; it is about the vision that it has for America.

Over 70 years ago, President Franklin Roosevelt issued an economic bill of rights, proclaiming: In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident: the right to a useful and remunerative job; the right to earn enough to provide adequate food; the right of every family to a decent home; the right to adequate medical care; the right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment; and the right to a good education. He closed with these words: "All of these rights spell security."

Enacting a budget that advances these economic rights for all Americans is my top priority. That means the budget must create good-paying jobs, improve access to quality, affordable education, ensure retirement security for our seniors, and lower the tax burden on working families. The American people share these priorities. They want a plan, a budget, a vision for our Nation that builds a foundation for middle-class families to thrive.

Two months ago, I stood on the Senate floor to review the budget proposed as the Senate Republican budget. In category after category, that budget earned a failing grade. Unfortunately, I am here today to say that the plan that has come out of the conference committee from the House and Senate Republicans is even worse. It constitutes an egregious assault on working Americans. It slashes investments in infrastructure and education, failing to close tax loopholes and attacking financial reform. It is fundamentally misaligned with the values of working Americans. It is poised to move our Nation in exactly the wrong direction—more tax breaks and corporate welfare for millionaires, billionaires, and large corporations that are already doing phenomenally well and more pain and suffering for the middle class, working families, and the most vulnerable.

With this budget, the GOP is continuing to play games with Americans' health care coverage, claiming we can grow our economy by cutting health care for seniors and children and the poorest in our society. The Senate GOP budget wiped out coverage under the Affordable Care Act, and this budget continues to wreak havoc. It will immediately eliminate health insurance coverage for 16.4 million Americans and swell the ranks of the uninsured by 23 million individuals within a single year. It will deny millions of young adults the right to stay on their parents' health insurance plan until the age of 26. It will deprive 130 million Americans with preexisting conditions the right to purchase affordable health insurance if they lose their jobs or otherwise lose their health insurance. These numbers are appalling.

It puts our seniors back at risk of bankruptcy from unaffordable prescriptions because it wipes out the ACA's effort to fill in the Medicare Part D doughnut hole. In 2014 alone, seniors saved \$4.8 billion on prescription drugs,

and 39 million seniors will be forced to pay more for preventative services under this budget. The GOP budget takes seniors back to the bad old days where the doughnut hole would force more than 9.4 million seniors and persons with disabilities to pay billions more out of pocket for prescription drugs.

At a time when senior poverty is on the rise, shouldn't we be focused on helping our seniors retire with security and dignity? Instead, the new plan cuts Medicare deeply—\$430 billion over 10 years. It cuts Medicaid by at least \$400 billion, jeopardizing nursing home care for the most vulnerable senior Americans. It calls for ending Medicare as we know it by turning it into a voucher plan. Finally, it paves the way for a fast-track consideration of a way to repeal the Affordable Care Act through reconciliation.

When you total up these factors, look at the assault on seniors. There is more for prescription drugs and less for nursing home care and Medicaid. Medicare will be cut by \$430 billion, and it will be voucherized. Annual wellness checks and preventive services, such as mammograms and prostate cancer screening, will be wiped out. What this budget does is turn security into insecurity. What this budget does is turn dignity into indignity. This is an unacceptable assault on our seniors.

It is also an assault on our children and on education. Both Democrats and Republicans agree that we want a chance for our children to get ahead and to pursue their dreams. Shouldn't the budget tell our children that education is a priority? The Republican plan makes new cuts to Head Start that would kick 400,000 children off the program over a 10-year period—400,000 empty Head Start chairs across America.

This picture is from an event that I held at Oregon's Whitaker School. The cuts in the Senate Republican plan to Head Start would mean 15 empty chairs just at this one location. But now we are talking about a budget that wipes out an opportunity for 400,000 children from struggling families to get a head start through Head Start.

The conference report doesn't just hit early childhood education; it also fails our children with regard to opening the doors of opportunity for higher education. College costs are soaring, so it makes sense to strengthen Pell grant funding. But this Republican budget slashes Pell grant funding by about one-third. Picture one out of every three of our children who use a Pell grant to get through the doors of college, the doors of opportunity, unfortunately having that opportunity taken away. This budget cuts the program by \$90 billion over 10 years and will make college out of reach for so many when we should be going in the other direction.

That is not all. It also increases student loan debt by an average of \$4,000 for an estimated 30 million students,

making the children from struggling families pay more for basic need-based student loans.

I believe in opportunity. I believe in the American dream. I believe that higher education is one of the best pathways to the middle class. We cannot and must not adopt a budget designed to slam the doors of opportunity shut on millions of our children.

There is more to be concerned about. One of the keys to prosperity is infrastructure. My colleague from Minnesota was just illuminating many of the problems in that area. Why shouldn't a budget prioritize improving our Nation's crumbling roads, bridges, dams, water systems, airports, and rail systems?

We have a huge infrastructure deficit. Our highway trust fund is running out of money. Right now Europe is investing 5 percent of its GDP in infrastructure and the United States is investing less than 2 percent. We are vastly underinvesting, and this budget continues and aggravates that underinvestment, hurting the creation of good-paying jobs now and doing enormous damage to the economy of the future.

Our parents did far better for us by putting a massive infusion of funds for infrastructure that strengthened the system and strengthened our economy today. Shouldn't we do the same for the next generation? And then we can turn to food security.

Our country has 40 million hungry Americans. In the wealthiest Nation on Earth, shouldn't our budget make sure families can put food on the table? This Republican budget says no. It supports making massive cuts to programs that provide critical assistance to low-income families. This plan eliminates nutrition assistance for 1.2 million women, infants, and children who rely on the WIC Program through \$10 billion in cuts to programs over the next decade. This budget would cut \$660 billion over 10 years for programs that support low-income individuals and families, including massive unspecified cuts to food stamps. With this budget, my Republican colleagues are telling the parents of children and financially challenged families: Let them go hungry. And that is just wrong.

Since this budget cuts food, Pell grants, infrastructure, and health care, and since it does so much damage to working families, shouldn't it ask for some small sacrifice from those who are best off? Apparently not. This Republican budget takes from the most vulnerable and gives it to the wealthiest families in America. This Republican budget provides a quarter of a trillion—and, yes, that is trillion with a T—dollar tax break for the wealthiest 0.2 percent of Americans while increasing taxes on 13 million working families with 25 million children by diminishing the earned income tax credit and the child tax credit, affecting families who earn just a modest amount with an average household income of just \$22,000.

I cannot conceive of any economic or moral argument that justifies taking money out of the pockets of struggling families—from Pell grants to Head Start to food on the table—and giving it away to the already wealthiest Americans. Perhaps one of my colleagues who is voting for this budget would like to explain why taking from the poor to give more to the wealthiest families in America is justified, because it is not justified.

Despite the fact that our richest families already pay less in their marginal tax than working families pay, this Republican budget wants to give more away to them from the American Treasury and do it by taking food and education opportunities out of the reach of our struggling families.

This budget removes two amendments that were originally adopted in the Senate budget. Senator MURRAY's amendment would have allowed Americans to earn paid sick leave. It was supported by 61 Senators, including 15 Republicans, but it was eviscerated in this budget. The second amendment was introduced by Senator SCHATZ. It would have ensured that all legally married same-sex spouses have equal access to Social Security and veterans' benefits they have earned. It was broadly supported but wiped out in this joint House-Senate Republican budget.

This budget takes away from hard-working, middle-class Americans, from struggling Americans who are often working two to three minimum-wage jobs, and it gives away to the wealthy and well-connected, not asking them for one slim dime—not one egregious tax loophole closed—and gives them preferred tax cuts, returning millions of dollars to the wealthiest families.

Is this a budget that works for working Americans or is it a budget for the best off? I think it is clear from the topics I have covered that this is a budget for the best off at the expense of everyone else in America in every possible way that provides a foundation.

If we return to the vision laid out by Franklin Roosevelt in 1944 of the self-evident economic truths, of a right to a good job, to earn enough for adequate food, to a decent home, to adequate medical care, and to protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment, this budget fails every test and should be defeated.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I wish to speak on the budget resolution conference report that we are considering today.

In my view, this is the worst budget resolution that I have seen in my 22 years in the Senate. It represents a major step backwards for the country, and I believe we need to go back to the drawing board.

Budget resolutions are as much about priorities as they are about numbers, and I believe this budget resolution sets all the wrong priorities.

At a time when millions of families are still struggling to recover from the

recession, this budget would raise their taxes while cutting taxes for the wealthiest Americans, who have only gotten wealthier in recent years.

The budget calls for the elimination of the child tax credit and the earned income tax credit, which would raise taxes by an average of \$900 on 13 million working families. Yet, at the same time, the budget would eliminate the estate tax, which is only paid by 5,400 families each year who inherit estates worth more than \$10 million.

Let me repeat that: this budget calls for raising taxes on 13 million low-income families in order to pay for tax cuts for the 5,400 wealthiest families, representing the richest 0.2 percent of our country.

Prioritizing the rich over struggling families is at the heart of what is wrong with this budget.

In addition, this budget calls for dramatic funding cuts for the very Federal programs that these working families rely on most. Nationwide, the cuts required by this budget would: prevent 35,000 low-income children from enrolling in Head Start, an early childhood education program; cut Federal funding for public schools that serve more than 1.9 million low-income students; increase the cost of college for more than 8 million low-income students through cuts to Pell grants; prevent 2.2 million Americans from accessing job training services; and eliminate health coverage through Medicaid for 14 million low-income Americans.

In my view, these cuts are draconian and wholly unnecessary. I also believe that these cuts would only further exacerbate income inequality and economic hopelessness, the very forces that have been fueling unrest throughout the country.

The events in Baltimore that have been broadcast across the Nation in recent weeks are not only a response to years of police brutality, but also the result of whole neighborhoods being left behind economically.

As a former big-city mayor, I remember a time when there was robust Federal and State support for cities to redevelop depressed neighborhoods and provide educational and employment opportunities for their citizens.

That priority no longer exists, certainly not in the austere funding levels of this budget. Instead, we have seen a total abandonment of our cities over the past three decades.

When I was mayor of San Francisco, the Community Development Block Grant program, CDBG, was the primary source of Federal funding to help State and local governments undertake housing, economic development, and neighborhood revitalization projects. During my time at city hall, CDBG funds peaked at \$3.7 billion, which would be the equivalent of \$10.6 billion in inflation-adjusted 2014 dollars. In 2014, Congress provided only \$3.023 billion for CDBG, just 28 percent of that peak inflation-adjusted amount.

For my city, when CDBG was at its prime, it meant we had around \$28 million per year to use for police, fire departments, and economic development projects. Under the funding levels in this GOP budget, San Francisco would be slated to receive only around \$16 million a year, just 20 percent of what I had when adjusting for inflation.

If you care about our cities and the problems facing them, these are the dollars that can really make a difference. They work; I have seen it. Yet, they would simply not be there under this budget.

At the same time, many States, including California, have cut funding for local redevelopment projects, further straining local government funding for economic development and neighborhood revitalization.

Now, I recognize Congress can't solve all of the country's problems, and pouring money into cities will not cure all of their ills.

But I believe the central role of the Federal Government should be to expand opportunities for the people who need it most, not those who have already succeeded in life.

This budget doesn't do that. Not only does this budget not help working families, it would actually make their situation even worse.

This budget would take away the healthcare of the most vulnerable, make it even harder for Americans to find a job, deny our Nation's youth the opportunity to learn, and raise taxes on those who can least afford it.

The Republican priorities reflected in this budget are morally wrong and terrible for our country's future. It is time to develop a budget that helps all Americans, not just the wealthy few.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, the budget conference report before us today charts the wrong course for our country and threatens our economic and national security.

During the consideration of the Republican Senate budget a few weeks ago, I laid out concerns about its most alarming aspects and my reasons for opposing it. My concerns and opposition have not changed because this Republican budget conference report doesn't deviate from the Senate budget's construct.

Indeed, the Republican budget stacks the deck in favor of special interests and makes it harder for middle-class families to get ahead. For example, their budget would eliminate the estate tax, giving the wealthiest 0.2 percent of Americans a \$269 billion tax cut over 10 years. It would pave the way to cut millionaire's top marginal tax rate from 39.6 percent to 25 percent. At the same time, it would raise taxes on 16 million middle-class families by ending the expansion of the earned income tax credit and child tax credit. These choices by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are clear and stand in stark contrast to policies my Democratic colleagues and I fight for that help middle-class families and grow the economy from the middle out.

The Republican budget would also keep the sequester in place, which puts unworkable caps on nondefense and defense spending. Both sides of the ledger need relief from the sequester for our Nation's economic and national security. But it seems that my colleagues on the other side are only willing to use the overseas contingency operations, OCO, account to provide relief to defense spending despite what we have heard from our military leaders on the need to address both sides of the ledger and that using OCO in this manner has its own serious shortcomings.

The Pentagon simply cannot meet the complex set of national security challenges without the help of other government departments and agencies—including State, Justice, Homeland Security, and the intelligence community. In the Armed Services Committee, we have heard compelling testimony on the essential role of other government agencies in ensuring our Nation remains safe and strong. The Department of Defense's share of the burden would surely grow if these agencies were not adequately funded as well.

Adding funds to OCO does not solve the Defense Department's problems. As Army Chief of Staff General Odierno said, "OCO has limits and it has restrictions and it has very strict rules that have to be followed. And so if we're inhibited by that, it might not help us. What might happen at the end of the year, we have a bunch of money we hand back because we are not able to spend it."

Making a 1-year plus up to OCO also does not help the Defense Department with the certainty and stability it needs when building its 5-year budget. As General Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, testified, "we need to fix the base budget . . . we won't have the certainty we need" if there is a year by year OCO fix. Defense Secretary Carter added that raising OCO does not allow the Defense Department to plan "efficiently or strategically."

While adding funds to OCO would provide some relief to the Defense Department, it is to defense alone, leaving domestic agencies at sequestration levels. And the truth is that the Defense Department cannot do its job without other departments. As General Mattis said, "If you don't fund the State Department fully, then I need to buy more ammunition." And in recent testimony, the commanders of Northern Command and Southern Command stated they could not accomplish their mission of protecting this country without the Coast Guard, the Border Patrol, DEA, and the intelligence community.

Moving beyond the needs we have to keep the Nation safe, there is a whole list of needs that ensure Americans and our economy stays healthy and thrives. I would like to bring attention to one such need—addressing lead poisoning, a preventable tragedy that dramatically impacts a child's health and ability to

learn. This budget would mean cuts to programs that help keep kids healthy like the lead poisoning prevention program. The kinds of physical health issues and developmental delays that stem from lead poisoning have long term effects on our children, our communities, and our economy. Indeed, educational system costs are estimated at \$38,000 over 3 years per child with special education needs due to lead poisoning.

The impact is especially pronounced in low-income and minority neighborhoods and populations in cities like Providence or as the Nation has recently seen in the dramatic events unfolding in Baltimore. These lead poisoning prevention programs are the kinds of initiatives that help put disadvantaged communities on an even playing field and, ultimately, work to ensure that our children can grow up to contribute to their families and their communities.

I have mentioned several shortsighted provisions, but this budget is replete with them. We cannot short-change our Nation's investments in the middle class, in our children, and our national security and expect long-term prosperity. That is why I will vote no and urge my colleagues to do the same.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

RECOGNIZING MONTANA'S SMALL BUSINESSES

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Montana's thousands of small businesses and for their contributions to our State's economy.

During National Small Business Week, we recognize all of the hard-working Montana men and women who took the risk to start a small business. These men and women have spent countless, sleepless nights working to create jobs and grow their business in a State they love and call home.

Before being elected to Congress, I spent nearly 3 decades in the private sector, and I know firsthand there is no better place to live and work than in Montana. I also know that our small businesses are critical to Montana's economy and our State's future.

According to the Small Business Administration, small businesses represent more than 97 percent of all Montana employers, in turn employing more than 68 percent of Montana's private sector labor force.

I am excited to say there are a lot of small business success stories in Montana. We have countless business leaders and entrepreneurs working to drive our State's economic growth and helping us lead the way in a variety of industries, from tourism and agriculture to technology and resource development.

Look no further than Bozeman, my hometown, where Advanced Electronic Designs is doing incredible things in innovations, helping to build up the Montana high-tech sector. Their team is comprised of 15 Montana State University engineers, and together they have designed more than 70 percent of the

LED signs in Times Square—from the NBC “Today” show to the Disney store.

I have also had the opportunity to tour ALCOM in Bonner, MT, to see their trailer manufacturing facility. They just won the Small Business Administration’s 2015 Small Business Award for Montana Exporter of the Year. This award recognizes ALCOM’s achievement in significantly increasing their export sales, profits, and jobs, while encouraging other Montana businesses to find new markets for their goods.

This is an exciting time to do business back home in Montana. From our growing technology sector to our State’s diverse natural resources, there is a lot of opportunity to create jobs and grow businesses in Montana. Unfortunately, the Federal Government’s over-of-touch policies and bureaucratic overreach continue to prevent Montana’s small businesses from reaching their full potential. Too many Montana businesses face regulatory burdens that hinder innovation and block opportunities for growth.

Our Tax Code is too complex and serves as yet another barrier to prosperity. And ObamaCare’s burdensome and costly mandates are forcing millions of dollars in new fees and compliance costs upon Montana’s small businesses, in turn forcing our job creators to downsize, reduce employee hours, or close their doors altogether.

When I drive around in Montana, I have yet to hear a small business owner ask for more regulations and higher taxes. We need commonsense policies that encourage Montana’s job creators to innovate and to grow. We need solutions to lift these regulatory barriers, reduce tax burdens, and create long-term certainty for hard-working Montanans.

I have long said that the best solutions don’t come from bureaucrats in Washington, DC; they come from Main Street Montana and our State’s hard-working businesses and community leaders because in Montana, we understand that jobs come from small business, not big government. That is why we need to reduce the redtape that is holding our small businesses back and work toward commonsense regulations that don’t place unnecessary burdens on Montana families and Montana small businesses.

We do need comprehensive tax reform that is fair, that is simpler, that promotes economic opportunity, and that works for all Montanans. And we need to repeal and replace ObamaCare with Montana-driven solutions that put patients and their doctors at the center of a health care equation and don’t place these job-killing burdens on our small businesses.

Instead of hindering our small businesses, we should reward them with flexibility and with the freedom they need to thrive and empower them with the tools they need to create jobs. That starts with educating Montana’s future

leaders and ensuring that students have the tools they need to succeed in their future careers.

It is no secret that for many recent college graduates, finding a job in today’s economy is harder than ever. This is especially true in Montana, where students are often forced to leave our State to find good-paying and long-lasting careers. It has been said that our top three exports are our grain, our cattle, and our children.

As we work to grow Montana’s technology and resources, we need to ensure that our students have the skills they need to get ahead and find jobs at home. From Montana’s tribal colleges and vocational schools to the new Jake Jabs College of Business and Entrepreneurship Building at Montana State University, Montana’s educational institutions are leading the way in giving our students the head start they need to succeed outside of classrooms and help grow our State’s economy because when small businesses succeed, our economy thrives.

We need to continue to find ways to encourage investment, entrepreneurship, and innovation in our State and all across our Nation. Our country was founded on the principles of hard work and entrepreneurialism. I am proud that Montana’s small businesses continue to exemplify these pillars of our Nation’s heritage and are leading the way in economic innovation.

During this National Small Business Week, I encourage all of my fellow Montanans to shop small and join me in supporting Montana’s small businesses and thanking them for the important role they hold in our State—not just this week but every week.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, today, for the first time in 6 years, Congress will pass a budget, and we are passing a budget that actually balances. This fulfills another basic responsibility of governing and an important promise Republicans made to the American people.

In advance of this vote, I wish to take a moment to applaud Chairman MIKE ENZI for his leadership on this issue. Because of his strong work, our balanced budget will help grow our economy, reduce the debt, repeal ObamaCare, and rein in Washington overreach. Our balanced budget proves that the Senate is fully working again on behalf of the American people.

OBAMACARE

Mr. President, I wish to speak about another issue that is also important to Americans across the country, an issue which I hear about as I travel the State of Wyoming and which I heard about this weekend.

Last week, the Democratic leader came to the floor of the Senate and he made some very interesting statements about the President’s health care law. He said ObamaCare is a smashing success. That was last week.

On Monday, we had this headline in the Wall Street Journal:

U.S. Emergency Room Visits Keep Climbing: People on Medicaid turn to hospital care when doctor access is limited, new survey suggests.

It is interesting to take a look at this large story and learn about how the number of visits to emergency rooms keeps climbing in spite of what the President promised during the debate of the President’s health care law.

The article goes on to say:

Emergency room visits continue to climb in the second year of the Affordable Care Act, contradicting the law’s supporters who had predicted a decline in traffic as more people gained access to doctors and other health care providers.

This is according to a survey by the American College of Emergency Physicians. They should know; they are the ones in the emergency room treating patients. The group says that people whom the health care law pushed on to Medicaid—pushed on to Medicaid—are having trouble getting appointments or even finding a doctor to take care of them because it is someone who doesn’t take their new coverage. Does the Democratic minority leader think that is a smashing success? This is a survey of over 2,000 emergency room doctors. Seventy-five percent of them said they have seen increases in emergency room care since 2014. Only one out of 20 ER doctors said they have seen a decrease.

The article quotes one doctor, Dr. Howard Mell, as saying: “There was a grand theory the law would reduce ER visits.”

A grand theory? Yes, it was.

He said: “Well, guess what, it hasn’t happened. Visits are going up despite the [law], and in a lot of cases because of it.”

That is according to one emergency room doctor who sees the results of the Obama health care law every day in the emergency room where he takes care of patients.

This really shouldn’t surprise anyone. We have seen the warning signs coming now for a while. Back in December, the Department of Health and Human Services found that more than half of the health care providers listed for Medicaid plans—half listed as taking Medicaid patients—couldn’t schedule appointments for patients, and they are even listed with Health and Human Services as taking care of Medicaid patients. This is only of the doctors who actually care for Medicaid patients in the first place. We know that about half of doctors won’t see Medicaid patients at all because the reimbursement is so low for taking care of them.

For more than one-quarter of the doctors, the wait time for a patient to actually get an appointment is more than a month. Does the Democratic leader think that is a smashing success, waiting more than a month to see a doctor?

Last year, almost half of doctors said they had seen an increase in emergency

room visits, and now we see it is much higher. Some supporters of the law last year said that wasn't important. They said: Don't worry, the numbers will drop off after the first year as more people get primary care physicians. Well, it hasn't happened, and it has actually gotten worse. About half of the ER doctors saw an increase in the first year of ObamaCare coverage and 75 percent saw an increase this year, the second year.

It is not getting better. It continues to get worse, to the point that USA TODAY had an article dated May 4, yesterday, page 1: "ER Visits Surge Despite ObamaCare."

It says:

Three-quarters of emergency room doctors say they are seeing ER patient visits surge since ObamaCare took effect—just the opposite of what many Americans expected would happen.

It is not what many Americans expected would happen.

Look at what the President said would happen. Back in 2009, the President was trying to pass the law, and President Obama said this: "If everybody's got coverage, then they're not going to go to the emergency room for treatment."

That was one of the biggest reasons the law required everyone in America to have insurance coverage. Remember, that is the mandate. It is called the individual mandate, and it remains extremely unpopular today. The President kept saying it over the years. He said it early on, he said it during the debate, and he said it after the law passed. He continues to hold this position in spite of the fact that 75 percent of emergency room doctors—2,000 doctors who actually work in emergency rooms—are saying: It is not true, Mr. President. The ERs are getting more and more crowded.

We see what happens when an ER gets more crowded: The wait time goes up, the mortality rates for patients trying to get treatment there goes up—because of the health care law.

In 2013, the President told one group of people: "It means that all the providers around here, instead of having to take in folks in the emergency room, they suddenly have customers who have insurance."

The President's statements continue to fly in the face of reality. According to the people who really know what is going on, the medical coverage is not keeping people out of emergency rooms. It has become crystal clear that coverage does not equal care. Not only is ObamaCare coverage not delivering care, in many cases the system to provide the coverage isn't even working.

There was an article last Friday in the Washington Post. The headline was "Nearly half of ObamaCare exchanges are struggling over their future."

It says: "Nearly half of the 17 insurance marketplaces set up by the states and the District [of Columbia] under President Obama's health laws are struggling financially."

Does the minority leader think that is a smashing success?

According to this article, "many of the online exchanges are wrestling with surging costs, especially for balky technology and expensive consumer call centers—and tepid enrollment numbers."

It talks about problems in Minnesota, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Colorado. In Oregon, the exchange has failed so spectacularly that the State had to shut it down entirely.

The Washington Post says: "States have already received nearly \$5 billion in Federal grants to establish the online marketplaces."

That is \$5 billion that hard-working American taxpayers had to pay to set up these exchanges, and half of these exchanges, in spite of all of that taxpayer money, are now struggling financially.

This article quotes one expert, Sabrina Corlette, who is a project director at Georgetown University's Center for Health Insurance Reforms. She said: "A lot of people are going to want to know: What happened to all those taxpayer dollars?"

Well, that is what a lot of Senators want to know. That is exactly what Senators on this side of the aisle have been asking for quite a while now. What happened to all of that hard-earned taxpayer money? How much of that \$5 billion was wasted?

The States with these failing exchanges are now looking at raising taxes and raising fees on everybody else's insurance claims. So in half of the States, the exchanges where people are supposed to sign up for coverage are failing. Billions of taxpayer dollars wasted, and States are looking at charging people even more. That is the President's solution for health care in America.

People who do get coverage and want to see a doctor may have to wait for more than a month. They may end up going to the emergency room along with millions of other people since ObamaCare's mandates began.

Does the minority leader, who came to the floor last week calling this health care law a smashing success, really think that is so? This is not what the American people wanted from health care reform. People knew what they wanted, and they wanted something very simple: They wanted the care they need from a doctor they choose at a lower cost. ObamaCare has failed on every one of those things. It is not a smashing success.

It is time for us to finally give Americans the health care they were asking for all along.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, a budget is about building for the future. A budget is about what it takes for our families, our businesses, and our economy to grow and prosper.

The basics are pretty simple: Our kids need access to a good, affordable

education. Our workers need good wages and good benefits. Our businesses and our workers need transit—roads and bridges that are safe enough, strong enough, and fast enough to get us to work and keep goods and services moving. Our workers need good jobs here in America, jobs built on 21st-century innovation and technology. And everyone needs to know that we are in this together, that we won't kick people to the ground, that we will help those who need it most, including seniors, children, and families struggling to make ends meet. That is how we build a strong future.

The Republicans have a different vision of how to build a future. The Republican budget plan will make the rich richer and the powerful more powerful while leaving our kids, our college students, our seniors, our workers, and our families to fall further and further behind.

The people of Massachusetts didn't send me here to do what I can to help the richest of the rich; they sent me here to work for them. So I want to talk about what this Republican budget will mean to the people of our State.

Assuming it is applied proportionately, the Republican budget can cut mandatory transportation funding by 40 percent over the next decade. That will be significantly fewer dollars to repair and improve our highways and to help keep our buses and trains moving in Massachusetts. So if you already think we have a crumbling infrastructure, if you are already worried about old buses and whether the T can struggle through another winter, remember that the Republicans want to slash the support for transportation by 40 percent. With these cuts, our crumbling infrastructure will crumble even faster.

These cuts will also cost jobs. Economists estimate that this Republican budget could mean 56,000 fewer jobs in Massachusetts alone.

This budget also takes aim at our kids. Over the next decade, it could eliminate Head Start services for 400,000 children across this country, cutting the program by more than \$4 billion. Little kids are under attack, and so are big kids. The Republican budget could also make college more expensive for the 131,000 Massachusetts students who receive Pell grants. And cutting the student loan interest rate? Forget it. The Republican budget keeps sucking billions of dollars in profits off student loans.

The Republican budget puts Massachusetts residents' health at risk, especially the health of our seniors. Today, the Affordable Care Act saves seniors billions of dollars in prescription drugs. The days when seniors had to choose between filling a prescription and paying the rent were over, but under the Republican budget, almost 80,000 seniors in Massachusetts could each pay an average of \$920 more per year for prescription drugs.

It gets worse. About 900,000 seniors in Massachusetts could lose free preventive Medicare health services and

about 26,000 Massachusetts nursing home residents who rely on Medicaid could face cuts to their care and an uncertain future.

What about medical research and the technologies of the future, the kind of work we are proud to do in Massachusetts? For over 10 years, Congress has decimated medical research funding, reducing the buying power of the National Institutes of Health by nearly 25 percent and choking off support for projects that could lead to the next major breakthrough against cancer, heart disease, ALS, diabetes, or autism.

With people living longer and longer and more and more families desperate for a breakthrough on Alzheimer's, what is the Republican budget solution? Cut the NIH budget. Cut medical research. In fact, compared with the President's budget, the Republican budget could mean 1,400 fewer NIH grants a year.

The Republican budget also cuts \$600 billion from income security programs, such as nutrition assistance, potentially jeopardizing food stamps for thousands of Massachusetts families who depend on this program to put food on the table. And just to turn the knife a little deeper for families in Massachusetts, the Republican budget could cut funding for heating assistance—funding that helps 183,000 Massachusetts families stay warm in the winter.

We know whom this budget would hurt—millions of middle-class families in Massachusetts and all over this country who are busting their tails to try to make ends meet. It will hurt people who work hard and play by the rules but who are seeing opportunity slip away. Why? Why inflict so much damage on hard-working American people, on students and seniors, on kids and construction workers? Why cut back the support for researchers trying to cure Alzheimer's or college kids trying to get an education? Why? One answer. Once again, the Republicans want to give billions of dollars in tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans—and they expect everyone else to pay for it. The Republicans have planned \$269 billion in tax cuts that could go to just a few thousand of the richest families. That is not just irresponsible, it is just plain wrong.

A budget is about values. The Republicans' values are on display here. This budget is about making sure that a tilted playing field tilts even further, and everyone else gets left further and further behind. Those aren't American values. We believe and we have always believed in opportunity. We believe that everyone should have a fighting chance to build a better life for themselves and their children.

Mr. President, we weren't sent here just to help the rich get richer. It is time for the Senate to stand up for the values that build a strong middle class, and we can start by voting down this terrible Republican budget.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

CITIZEN UNREST AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the unrest we have seen, especially in Baltimore in the last week and to a lesser extent in several other cities around the country, including the city of Philadelphia in my State of Pennsylvania.

There has been, of course, no shortage of discussions on this matter, going back to last year, to the protests in Ferguson, MO, and those surrounding other flashpoints that have involved law enforcement officials.

We have in one way or another landed on a bit of a national conversation about police practices, and that is a good conversation. I think we should have that. I, for instance, think we should seriously consider body cameras for use by police officers.

I think this conversation is closely related to some other things that we need to be talking about as well, including the problems of urban America that have a number of causes and that certainly deserve our attention and our action. For instance, I think we can and should be talking about how we can create better jobs, better economic growth, and a better economic climate in our cities, especially our big cities. We need to talk about how we can bring down the terrible rate of poverty that has been persistent for decades in our cities. We have to talk about how schools have been letting down too many poor families in our big cities.

We ought to talk about family structure as well because we know that a breakdown of families contributes enormously to all sorts of social pathologies—involvement in gangs and drug use and drug dealing, criminality in general, and poverty itself.

We can talk about guns, too. I remain proud of the work I have done across the aisle to try to make it more difficult for guns to fall into the hands of people who have no right to be using them—criminals and those with mental illness.

These are all things we ought to be talking about in this great debate, and we should be acting on these things in the Senate and in State and local governmental bodies across the country.

There is something in this discussion that we should also be willing to talk about. It is something that hasn't gotten as much attention during this national conversation about police practices, and it is something that has been bothering me for some time. I think it came to a head this week in Baltimore. I am going to talk about this now and I am going to continue to talk about this in the coming weeks and months because I think it is an important part of this national discussion.

My concern specifically is over the growing scapegoating of police officers in America today. Before I go any further, let me be perfectly clear about

one central point. If a police officer acts unprofessionally, acts outside the bounds of ethical standards or breaks the law, then by all means that police officer has to be held accountable and punished for his or her transgression. There is no excuse whatsoever for unlawful police conduct. That absolutely cannot be tolerated not even one little bit.

I will be clear about another point. It is true that there are real and horrible cases of police misconduct. No one I know is trying to deny that or sweep it under the rug or pretend it doesn't happen. It does happen, and it should never be tolerated.

Let's also keep this in perspective. There are doctors who break the law. There are accountants who break the law. There are lawyers who break the law. There are elected public officials who break the law. The fact is that there are bad actors in every profession, in every line of work, in every walk of life, and that is true of the police as well. But if you listen to many of the police critics we hear from today, you would think there is some sort of epidemic of crimes perpetrated by the police. That, I assure you, is not true.

In my years in public life, I have spent a lot of time with police officers. I have gotten to know many of them. I have gone on rides with them. I have listened to their concerns. I have met with them. I have supported their community organizations. I have attended the charitable fundraisers they have held. By and large, I can tell you that I don't know of any group of people anywhere in our society who are more dedicated professionals than the policemen and policewomen across our country.

Far from the epidemic of police misdeeds that some claim to be happening out there, I think just the opposite is true. The overwhelming majority of police are honest men and women. They have very high ethical standards. They don't have a racist bone in their body. Our police have incredibly difficult and often dangerous jobs to do, and it is an incredibly important job as well.

Our communities—let's face it—we all depend on the police. That is probably more true in urban areas than anywhere else in the country.

So we need to have a conversation about bad police practices, but we also need to have a conversation about what a great job the vast majority of police are doing across our country and how much they deserve our thanks and our support.

Unfortunately, the scenes we witnessed in Baltimore last week certainly work against the kind of gratitude we ought to show to our law enforcement community. I am not talking about what happened to Freddie Gray. Mr. Gray absolutely deserves justice. If the police in the Gray case committed crimes, then they must be punished. I don't question that in the least. But what happened last week in

Baltimore was not only about Freddie Gray. In scenes reminiscent of last year in Ferguson, last week in Baltimore we saw a great American city dissolve into utter lawlessness. We saw riots that destroyed a senior citizen center, a CVS drugstore, numerous cars, all kinds of property. We saw dozens of injuries, including injuries to over 90 police officers.

We had a curfew imposed and the National Guard called in to restore order as though this were some kind of war zone. We even had Major League Baseball cancel two games and conduct one game where no fans were permitted to attend. They played before an empty stadium. How is that allowed to happen in a great American city?

Some people excuse this lawlessness and point to the difficult underlying conditions in the local community, but let's ask ourselves who gets hurt the most by these riots.

Well, we know it is the very poor people from these communities who now have no senior center to go to. They cannot go to CVS to get their prescriptions filled or to pick up necessities for their kids. And, of course, there is this big, red, flashing neon sign telling businesses, large and small—they could provide jobs and economic activity there—to stay away.

So where do the police come in on this? Well, President Obama called the looters and rioters in Baltimore thugs, and President Obama has received some criticism for that. I just would use an objective, indisputable term. These people are "criminals."

It is a serious crime to set a fire to a car or to a building. It is a serious crime to throw a rock or a bottle at a police officer. Assault and battery is a serious crime. It is a serious crime to engage in looting, and people who commit those acts are criminals. They should be arrested, they should be charged, and they should be prosecuted and punished to the full extent of the law, but in order for that to happen, we need the police. We need them to be actively engaged.

The Baltimore police officers have reported that they were ordered to stand down last week as the city was being destroyed. That is pretty tough to take—especially, I assume, for the law-abiding Baltimore citizens who need that police protection.

Instead of standing down in the face of wanton criminal acts, the police need to be allowed to do their job. They should make arrests. They should restore order. There should never be another American city that looks the way Baltimore did last week.

Now, when six police officers were charged on Friday in the death of Freddie Gray, there were celebrations in the streets in Baltimore. At a certain level, that is completely understandable. Whatever Mr. Gray did on that day, the day he was arrested, he certainly did not deserve to die, and his death cries out for answers. We need to have answers to these questions.

In the passions of last week, I understand why some people cheered the appearance that the criminal justice system was standing up for Mr. Gray. I totally understand that, but let me ask a question. What happens if these accused police officers are found to have not broken the law? What if one of them, several of them or even all of them are found not to have violated the law? What happens then? Will we see Baltimore, and maybe other cities, erupt in flames once more? That is already what appears to be forecast in some quarters.

What about those six individual police officers? Well, we know what happens if they are found guilty. If they are found guilty, they are going to go to jail for a long time, and that will be appropriate.

But what happens if they are found innocent? In the Ferguson, MO, case, a grand jury found there was no reason to believe a crime had been committed by the accused police officer, Darren Wilson.

The U.S. Justice Department also did an investigation, and they decided not to bring civil rights charges against Officer Wilson. So Officer Wilson was found to have committed no wrongdoing, neither by the local grand jury nor by the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Justice Department.

But what happened to Officer Wilson? Did anybody ask that question, What happened to Officer Wilson? Well, he faced multiple death threats. He ended up having to leave his job on the police force, the one job he had always wanted and he loved to do. He ended up having to move out of his home and go live somewhere else. He is only 28 years old.

Now, the accused police officers in Baltimore have life stories too. One of them is police Sergeant Alicia White. She is a 30-year-old African-American woman who joined the Baltimore Police Department 5 years ago. She is engaged to be married. A local Baltimore minister, who knows Sergeant White, described her this way:

She wanted to be a police officer because she is a Christian and wants to be a good role model for young black women. And she wanted to be that good cop in the community and bridge the gap between the police and the neighborhoods.

Of the six arrested officers, three are African Americans, three are White. None of this means any of these officers necessarily acted appropriately or right in this case. It is quite possible they did not and, if so, the court system, our legal judicial system, will determine that.

What I am simply trying to point out is that these police officers have human faces. They are human beings, and these officers are going to go through hell whether they deserve to or not. Their lives will never be the same whether they are guilty or innocent. There will be many people in the community who shun them, even if they are found to have done nothing wrong.

What message does that send to all the tens of thousands of police officers all across America who risk their lives every day to protect their communities from criminals? Unfortunately, it says there are a lot of people out there who are looking to misplace a lot of social problems we face in our country on the backs of the police. It says they might not be allowed to do their jobs when their communities most need them to do their jobs, and it says that one day, should they find themselves accused of wrongdoing, there might be a public mob that clamors for their conviction and threatens to burn down the city if the legal system finds them independent. That is a sad state of affairs.

I am not defending the officers in the Gray case. I don't know whether they are guilty or innocent. I expect the legal system to determine that, but that is not my point. My point is that while there are some police officers who act terribly and who must be stopped, there is no epidemic of police criminality in this country.

We should absolutely discuss and act upon the issues that surround police and community relations, by all means, and we also need to acknowledge the critical role the police play in keeping our community safe, the overwhelming majority of police who conduct themselves honorably day in and day out.

The next time there is a demonstration about police conduct, I hope it is a demonstration to thank the police for their dedication, their hard work, and their courage. That is a demonstration I will be honored to join.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. AYOTTE). The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, we are here debating choices. They happen to be choices about our budget, about the future of our Nation that will be determined by choices we make about how to invest.

That is the key concept at stake in this very momentous moment as we consider choices for how to invest in middle-class financial security, and all that goes along with it, job creation, infrastructure, education funding, clean energy research. All of those choices are critical to the future of our Nation, and we will make disastrous choices if we adopt the budget that has come to us in the conference report for fiscal year 2016 because it fails to understand the need for investment in our future.

We are in danger of leaving a lesser America—an America that for the first time in our history will reflect a lesser Nation left to our children and their grandchildren. All generations before us determined that they would sacrifice, that they would give back and pay forward. Yet now, sadly, in fact tragically, we endanger their future by failing in those investment decisions.

The conference agreement would cut trillions of dollars to domestic programs without seeking revenue. In

fact, it relies on gimmicks that undermine its integrity—a significant gimmick, for example, accounting, \$2 trillion in tax revenue from the Affordable Care Act while at the same time repealing that law. It relies on trillions of dollars in supposed savings without detailing how those savings will be accomplished.

At the very least, we owe a measure of integrity to the American people. We can disagree about choices, but at least we should be honest about how revenue is supposed to match the spending we allocate. The proposal before us would, in fact, repeal the Affordable Care Act, which has already allowed more than 16 million Americans to obtain health insurance, access preventive services, and save money on their premiums. It would cut more than \$1 trillion from Medicaid, reversing the expansion that has provided health insurance to millions of Americans.

Too many Americans are still struggling, and yet this budget would cut funding for job training and employment services. It would eliminate the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, which provides vital support for small manufacturers in Connecticut and across the country. Time and again, we have learned that education is the key to a brighter future for our children. Yet, tragically, this budget would cut the funding across the spectrum of American education, from universal prekindergarten, which would be slashed, to college affordability, where loan programs would be decimated. In fact, instead of making college more affordable, this budget decimates two critical programs that would help future students pay back loans. Remember, the average student debt in this country is in the tens of thousands of dollars. In Connecticut, it is about \$30,000, conservatively estimated.

This budget would increase student loan payments for millions of borrowers, and it would slash Pell grants—increase the cost of loans, cut the amount of grants available that enable students to avoid borrowing. In fact, it would cut the Pell Grant Program by nearly 30 percent and eliminate other important Federal subsidies.

These moneys are not spending, they are investments in our future, the futures of those students whose hopes and dreams will be constrained, undercut, and killed but also the future of our capacity to manufacture and compete around the globe because what we have—more than any other nation—is very smart, skilled people. That is why companies are coming back to this Nation after outsourcing.

One of these programs, the Pay as You Earn Program, caps monthly student loan payments at a level that is proportionate to their earnings and forgives debt after 20 years of repayment.

But the Republican budget would require cuts to this program in a way that could increase required monthly

payment increases of more than 50 percent to some borrowers, and it paves the way for eliminating the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, which assists students with debt payments for those who go into public service professions, such as teaching, firefighting, and policing. This program ought to be especially close to our hearts because we purport to be engaged in public service and to provide a role model for young people who engage in public service.

I am particularly concerned about this program's impact on our railroads, roads, bridges, and airports. We know those facilities as infrastructure—the magic word in the Senate, “infrastructure.” In fact, we had a hearing just this morning in the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee on the importance of fully funded, long-term investments in our Nation's highway transit and rail system.

We heard testimony from the public and private sectors about how important a revitalized and reinvigorated transportation network is for American competitiveness, American businesses, and American professionals to compete in the world. Yet, through this budget, we will not only sanction, but we will encourage and enable an inadequate investment in infrastructure. The budget conference report before us would cut funding for highways and mass transit by 40 percent over the next decade. There may be no more important fact to know about this budget.

So I regret that I will vote against this budget because I wish, as do many of my colleagues, that we could reach a bipartisan measure that will embody the best in America, not encourage a retreat from our public obligation.

In fact, I think America is ready to invest, ready to give back and to pay forward. In fact, I believe our wealthiest Americans are ready to do more and approve closing loopholes and ending subsidies, not making blanket cuts to vital programs, not cutting taxes for millionaires, as this budget would create a pathway to do, not forcing another 12 million middle-class families and students to pay for college by ending the American opportunity tax credit or adding \$1,100 more in burdens on them, and not forcing 16 million middle-class families to pay a \$900 tax hike by ending the expansions of the earned-income tax credit and child tax credit. I think our most fortunate Americans are ready to pay forward and do more and invest and, in fact, make more sacrifices, which is the way this budget ought to be arranged. And it isn't even a matter of sacrifices on the part of anyone; it is ending the subsidies for outsourcing to ensure that everyone pays their fair share without those hidden tax breaks and subsidies that can be closed.

I hope we can do better than this. I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing the budget conference report.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, a budget is a vision of the future, and it clearly appears the two sides have very different visions as to what our country should be and the direction in which we move.

At a time of unprecedented and grotesque income and wealth inequality, where 99 percent of all new income is going to the top 1 percent, my Republican colleagues say we need to give a massive tax break to the 5,000 wealthiest families in America—the top two-tenths of 1 percent—a \$269 billion tax break over a 10-year period. That is not what the American people believe. What they believe is that at a time when the rich and large corporations are doing phenomenally well, when we have a large deficit, when we have massive unmet needs in this country, that maybe, just maybe it is time to ask the wealthy and large corporations to start paying their fair share of taxes, not give them more tax breaks. That is exactly what this Republican budget does.

At a time when the United States is the only major country on Earth that doesn't guarantee health care to all people and when 35 million Americans today have no health insurance and even more are underinsured, with large copayments and high premiums, the Republican budget unbelievably—unbelievably—simply throws 27 million Americans off of health insurance. What happens to them? What happens when the Affordable Care Act is ended—which is what their budget does—and 16 million people lose their health insurance? What happens when another 11 million people lose their health insurance because of the \$440 billion cuts in Medicaid? What happens to 27 million Americans? How many of them will die? Clearly, many thousands will die. People who are sick will not be able to go to the doctor. People who are sick will get sicker and suffer. Twenty-seven million people thrown off of health insurance is beyond being unconscionable. Yet, that is what is in the Republican budget.

The Presiding Officer is a neighbor of mine in New Hampshire. I know that in New Hampshire—I have been there recently—and in Vermont, young people are wondering about how they are going to be able to afford to go to college and what kind of student debts they will incur when they leave college. Our charge is to work together to make sure that every young person in this country who has the ability and the desire and the willingness to go to college is able to go to college regardless of his or her income. That is what we need to do in a competitive global economy.

We used to have the highest percentage of college graduates in the world. Today, we are in 12th place. That is not where we should be if we want to compete globally in this difficult world economy.

What is the Republican solution? The Republican solution is to make a bad

situation much worse, with a \$90 billion cut over a 10-year period in mandatory Pell Grant funding—Pell grants being the major source of funding for low- and moderate-income young people in order to get help to go to college. This budget does exactly the opposite of what we should be doing.

We are the wealthiest country in the history of the world. The problem we are having is that almost all of that wealth is going to a handful of people at the top. Yet, today we have more people living in poverty than at almost any time in the modern history of America. We have seen some descriptions of that in the tragedy we recently observed in Baltimore in communities where 50 percent of the people are unemployed, where kids don't have enough to eat. Honestly, without being too rhetorical, I just don't understand how, when families are struggling to feed their kids, when everybody understands that hunger is a real problem in this country, anybody could vote for a budget that makes huge cuts in food stamps, in the WIC Program, and in other nutrition programs for families who are struggling to feed their families. That is not what this country is supposed to be about.

On top of all of that—on top of cutting health care, with 27 million people thrown off of health insurance; cutting education, making it harder for kids to go to college, harder for families to put their kids into Head Start; harder for poor families to feed their kids—my Republican colleagues say a major priority in this country is to give \$269 billion in tax breaks to the top two-tenths of 1 percent. Does anybody—anybody outside of this Chamber think that makes any sense at all? Does anybody outside of here think those are American priorities? Billionaires do not need another tax break. They are doing just great. They are doing fine.

Then, to add insult to injury, the Republican budget allows to expire the additional benefits we put into the earned-income tax credit and the child tax credit. That, in effect, would mean a tax increase for over 10 million working families. We would be raising taxes on low-income workers while lowering taxes on billionaires. Those are not the priorities of the American people.

Madam President, I hope very much we will reject this budget.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Madam President, the Senate will soon vote to adopt the conference report to S. Con. Res. 11, the budget resolution. I supported the budget resolution when we considered it in March, and I plan to support the conference report, but I was disappointed to see one difference between the budget resolution that was passed by the Senate this year and the conference report we will be voting on later today. The Senate's budget resolution contained language that would have created a point of order against

any legislation that designated more in the so-called OCO or overseas contingency operations funding than what the President requested in fiscal year 2016. The conference report we will soon consider does not contain that provision.

This point of order would have allowed those of us who have objected to off-budget funds being used in order to avoid spending caps—particularly in the international affairs budget—to at least raise the issue on various appropriations bills and other measures we consider in this body. This is an issue which needs to be raised, especially in light of the State Department's use of such funding.

It is bad enough that the administration has been requesting OCO funding to avoid making tough choices for its underlying budget since 2012, but Members of Congress have become enablers, consistently appropriating more OCO funds than the administration has asked for. In fiscal year 2014, the administration requested \$3.8 billion in OCO funding for international affairs; Congress appropriated \$6.5 billion. For fiscal year 2015, the administration requested \$7.8 billion in OCO funding for international affairs; Congress appropriated \$9.26 billion. That figure does not include the \$2.5 billion appropriated to address the Ebola crisis; we appropriated that separately as emergency funding.

While emergency funding and OCO are different designations, the practical effect is the same. This is funding which is not subject to budget spending caps created by the Budget Control Act.

This year, the administration has requested \$7 billion in OCO funding for international affairs.

Secretary Kerry said in early 2013 that "OCO funding supports the efforts of the department in meeting the extraordinary demands of operating in the frontline states of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and to a limited extent in other fragile regions." This year's OCO request includes funding for those countries, plus Syria, Jordan, and the Ukraine.

Some of my colleagues have concerns that the Defense Department will be shortchanged under the spending caps, and we have worked to increase OCO funding spending in 2016 beyond the \$57 billion requested by the President to \$96 billion in total. But that \$96 billion can be used for anything the administration and Congress both designate as being in support of "overseas contingency operations." It also enables departments that receive OCO-designated appropriations to avoid having to make the tough funding decisions in their underlying budgets.

I am disappointed the conference report we will consider today does not contain a point of order that would have at least enabled those of us who share these concerns I have raised today to raise this issue and to take some votes on it.

With that being said, I also understand that passing a budget is an important step in getting back to regular order and allowing Congress to carry out one of its primary responsibilities—establishing a budget for the Federal Government. By passing this budget, Congress will be able to start considering appropriations bills and other budget-related legislation. After all, it is Congress's job to exercise oversight and prioritize where and how Federal dollars are to be spent. In addition, passing a budget also initiates the reconciliation process for the committees in the House and the Senate that oversee the Affordable Care Act.

As I said earlier, I will support this conference report, but I would be remiss not to voice my concerns over the removal of the OCO-related point of order and the systemic use of off-budget funds to avoid busting the spending caps.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that all time remaining on the conference report be yielded back at 5:30 p.m. today and that the Senate vote on the adoption of the conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Madam President, the American people have consistently and overwhelmingly voiced their concern that our country is moving in the wrong direction, whether that be with regard to wage stagnation, unemployment or simply realizing the American dream.

Unfortunately, the budget resolution before us sends a strong message to the American people that Washington isn't listening. Instead of taking the opportunity to work together across party lines and move our country in the right direction, the Republican budget resolution continues to take our Nation down a road where Washington again stacks the deck against the middle class and rewards the wealthiest families and largest corporations in America.

There isn't a single tax expenditure or loophole that is closed in the Republican budget. This budget refuses to ask the wealthy to contribute a single dollar more to deficit reduction. It does nothing to eliminate the carried interest loophole at a time when Wall Street billionaires pay a lower effective tax rate than some truckdrivers, teachers, and nurses. In fact, this budget would eliminate the estate tax for wealthy families who inherit over \$10 million.

This budget doesn't just give a tax cut for the wealthiest 1 percent, it also calls for lowering the top individual tax rate at a time when the top 1 percent already earns more income than the bottom 50 percent.

What is more, the Republican budget resolution actually delivers a tax break

for the wealthiest 0.2 percent of Americans over the next decade, providing an average tax break of \$3 million to multimillionaires and billionaires. In fact, there are more Senators who will be voting later this afternoon on this budget proposal than the number of Wisconsin families who would benefit from the tax provision of this tax break I just cited.

Who picks up the tab for these giveaways? In my home State of Wisconsin, an estimated 158,000 hard-working families would pay \$1,000 or more in taxes under the Republican budget resolution. I wonder, do my colleagues on the other side of the aisle really believe this budget gives Americans “the right to rise”? Is this their idea of an “American revival” for our middle class?

Not only does the Republican budget resolution fall short when it comes to making strong investments in education to create a strong path to the middle class, it actually falls flat by actually cutting these investments, failing to make college education affordable, and ignoring the huge student debt crisis across America. For Wisconsin families, the cost of college education will increase for up to 117,000 students because of the Republican budget’s substantial cuts to the Pell Grant Program. At a time when our national economy moves forward with a slow and steady recovery, my State’s economy has continued to lag behind.

So I can’t support this Republican budget resolution when it doesn’t make the strong investments America desperately needs in our roads, in our bridges, and in our ports that will create jobs, boost our local economies, and provide businesses with the quality transportation system they need to move their goods to market. I can’t support this Republican budget resolution when about 46,000 Wisconsin jobs would be eliminated because of cuts to investment in transportation, education, and other programs.

At a time when both parties should be working together to pass a budget that grows our economy for the middle class and gives everyone a fair shot at getting ahead, this Republican budget resolution cuts investments in workforce readiness, leaving 40,000 Wisconsinites without the training that prepares them to put their hard work ethic to work moving our economy forward.

Many of the Wisconsin workers I hear from every day are really struggling to make ends meet. They are working more, taking home less, and worried—worried that for the first time in American history, their kids will have fewer opportunities than they did.

The Republican budget doesn’t address those worries, it doesn’t address those anxieties or those fears. It doesn’t respond to this insecurity. Rather, the Republican budget continues the same failed, top-down economics, where Washington rigs the rules in favor of special interests, in favor of millionaires and billionaires.

Unfortunately, the Republican proposal seeks to balance the budget on the backs of the middle class and those struggling to one day become a part of America’s middle class. This budget proposal marks another missed opportunity for the majority. The American people are right to believe this budget takes our country another step in the wrong direction because it turns its backs on building a stronger future. We can do better.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

Mr. ENZI. Madam President, section 3112 of the conference agreement directs the Joint Committee on Taxation and CBO to produce, alongside CBO’s conventional estimates, cost estimates that incorporate the macroeconomic effects of major policy changes. With respect to the designation of the major legislation that would fall within this definition, the chair of the Committee on the Budget in the Senate shall exercise the authority granted under subsection (c)(1)(B)(ii), in consultation with the appropriate chair or vice chair of the Joint Committee on Taxation, to designate a revenue measure as major legislation.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ENZI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ENZI. Madam President, I have been here most of the day listening to comments about the budget. I am fascinated by the budget speculation that has gone on here. Of course, I do know I only had 6 weeks to make up a budget for us to debate, and add to, subtract from, and then to conference. But a lot of what has been said is not actually in the budget. Of course, one of the comments was that it should be a bipartisan budget. In the whole time I have been here, there has not been a bipartisan budget. The majority party has always gotten to take the lead and outline what they see as a vision. But in the past, I remember we used to do our opening statements on the budget in the Budget Committee and then get a copy of the budget we had just commented on. I thought that was wrong. I provided them with it the day before the statements were made so they could make better comments on the budget and have better amendments.

What I really would have liked to have done is to have released it even a little earlier. I proposed this to them in exchange for them doing their amendments in advance so we could see their amendments and they could see our amendments. That would lead to a much more bipartisan budget event. That was not agreed to.

Now we are down to the point where we are talking about this final conference report, where we have gotten

the House and the Senate to agree on a position. I noticed a lot of people today said we were cutting highways. We are not cutting highways. There is a provision in there to take care of highways. I think everybody—both sides of the aisle—wants to make sure we have adequate highways in America. How we get there might be a little different. The President suggested we put a mandatory tax on money that is held overseas by companies to force them to bring it back. If that is done in too short of a period, that would bankrupt a lot of companies because they do have those invested in things overseas. But it is something everybody looking at international tax reform has been talking about. One of the difficulties is, if you do give a reduction in the amount of tax in order to encourage them to bring it back without making it mandatory, it shows up as a huge cost to the Federal Government. Right now they are taxed at 35 percent. If we were to say they could bring it back at the 14 percent the President suggested, that would be a 21-percent cost to our budget. But if we leave it at 35 percent, nobody is bringing that money back here. If we put it at 14 percent and make it mandatory, I guess they would bring the money back here, if we didn’t bankrupt them. That will be considered in the Finance Committee in the tax reform package.

I am certain something will be done on that to make us more competitive overseas, to bring the money back. I know they are talking about taking, as the President suggested, a portion of those funds to take care of the highways in the beginning, but we still have to have a long-term way to take care of highways, and that is going to require some bipartisan action.

Virtually everything that was talked about today in the way of criticism is something that still has to be done. It has to be done with a majority vote, and it has to make it through the whole Senate process, which probably requires 60 votes, which means it is going to be bipartisan, and then every one of those things we were accused of doing has to be signed by the President.

They have to be reasonable. They cannot be unreasonable, as we are seeing in there. Some do not even exist. For instance, we were accused of cutting Head Start money. That is not in the budget. There were some cuts to Head Start. That was part of the sequester a couple of years ago. I was astounded when some of the Head Start people came to my office and said: We got cut 7½ percent.

I said: No, no. It is 2.3 percent.

They said: No. We got cut 7½ percent.

What I found out was that the bureaucracy in DC kept their money and took it out on the kids out there. Kids were taken out of Head Start. They realized their error and they made some different changes and they restored the money out there.

I asked my people: Ok. You got your money back?

They said: Yes, but we still couldn't put our kids back because our costs went up so high under ObamaCare on health care for our employees that we had to put all of that into health care. That was not how it was supposed to work either, but that is how ObamaCare works.

They also talk about us cutting Pell grants. We moved Pell from mandatory to discretionary. It was not cut. It was moved so it could be reviewed on a regular basis, just like everything else. The estate tax was mentioned. Again, that is a Committee on Finance issue that would have to be dealt with. It has not been given approval for all the years that have been asked for, but that does not mean somebody cannot request it. We will see if the Finance Committee can find some way to do it.

I think we can tell from the discussion that probably was not going to happen. The numbers speak, and the speculation does not. But here are some of the things this budget does: It balances the budget within 10 years without raising taxes. It achieves more than \$5 trillion in savings, so it puts us on a slope to get to a balanced budget in 9 years. It produces a \$32 billion surplus in 2024 and a \$24 billion surplus in 2025 and it stays in balance. It boosts the Nation's economy by more than \$400 billion in additional economic growth over the next 10 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office. It is expected to grow 1.2 million additional jobs over the next 10 years—again, according to the Congressional Budget Office statement.

The balanced budget ensures a strong national defense. Yes, that is in there. The balanced budget provides for repeal and replacement of ObamaCare. The balanced budget preserves Medicare. We heard about these cuts to Medicare. There are some savings in Medicare. Under our plan, instead of those being spent on other programs outside of Medicare, those are to be used for Medicare.

We already saw that we did the doc fix. That is so the doctors would be adequately paid so they would continue to take Medicare patients—very important. That is taken care of in this budget. The balanced budget supports stronger economic growth. Note that the boost in economic growth will all come from the private sector. Government spending does not contribute to this growth.

As my fellow Budget Committee member and businessman Senator PERDUE notes, expanding government does not help grow the economy.

The budget agreement improves transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of the Federal Government by cutting waste and eliminating redundancies and enacting regulatory reform. It calls for modernizing Medicaid by increasing State flexibility and protecting those most in need of assistance. It improves honest

and responsible accounting practices as part of the Federal budget process by ensuring that fair value accounting is used, which provides a more honest accounting method.

I am the first accountant to chair the Budget Committee. It is very important for me to have it so we can tell exactly where things are going, not just in the first 10 years, which is what we have been typically doing, but looking at the outlying numbers too.

We are going through a baby boom retirement right now, and the number of people under Social Security is going just like that.

We did not change Social Security. Under the Budget Act, we are not allowed to change Social Security, but we are going to have to take a look at it. Looking at those numbers in the long term is going to force both sides of the aisle to take a look at what we need to do to save what we are used to.

This new honest accounting will tell us more accurately what the legislation will cost the hard-working taxpayers. It improves the administration and coordination of benefits, and it increases employment opportunities for disabled workers. It calls on Congress to pass a balanced budget amendment for the Constitution. There are a bunch of States that are working on it and 27 States passed the requirement for us to do that. Nine other States are close behind. If seven of the nine agree to that, we will have to actually balance the budget.

How difficult is that? Last year, we overspent \$468 billion. The dollars that we get to actually make decisions on are about \$1,100 billion. Some people call that \$1.1 trillion. I do not think that really tells the story; 1,100 billion sounds like a lot more than \$1.1 trillion. So \$468 billion overspent on an \$1,100 billion decision process, that is 50 percent. If we were to balance the budget, we would have to cut that by 50 percent, and people really would be concerned.

Why do we have to do that? Interest rates alone will cause us to do that. If the interest rates go up to what they normally would be—right now we are spending \$230 billion, and that is at an interest rate of 1.7 percent. With interest rates rising, we would have to spend \$1,745 billion over the next 10 years just on interest.

Another reason we need to get this budget done is so appropriators can get started. They are the ones that do the spending bills. There are 12 spending bills out there that get into the specifics of the things we are spending. All we did was give a blueprint for the overall picture for each of those 12 spending committees. But they need to take a look at what they have jurisdiction over and see where there is duplication, fraud, waste, and programs that are not even working.

We have a bunch of programs out there that we have not reauthorized. That means they have expired, but we are still spending money on them—\$293

billion a year on them. We have to do better.

There are two ways we can make a difference. We can look at those 260 programs and see if—if they have not been looked at for a long time, see if there couldn't be some savings there. Secondly, we can try to grow the private sector economy. Private sector growth by 1 percent would provide more than \$300 billion in additional tax revenue every year. That almost balances the budget by itself.

There are some things we can do if we start looking at how we can keep from impeding business, get business going and make it more competitive in the United States, and we can do better.

I hope the people will all support the budget we have. It isn't perfect. We had a short time to work on it compared to the time the other side had to work on it in previous years, but we did it, and now we need to finish it.

I ask for my colleagues' support on the budget.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Under the previous order, all time is yielded back.

The question is on agreeing to the conference report to accompany S. Con. Res. 11.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 48, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 171 Leg.]

YEAS—51

Alexander	Ernst	Moran
Ayotte	Fischer	Murkowski
Barrasso	Flake	Perdue
Blunt	Gardner	Portman
Boozman	Graham	Risch
Burr	Grassley	Roberts
Capito	Hatch	Rounds
Cassidy	Heller	Rubio
Coats	Hoeven	Sasse
Cochran	Inhofe	Scott
Collins	Isakson	Sessions
Corker	Johnson	Shelby
Cornyn	Kirk	Sullivan
Cotton	Lankford	Thune
Crapo	Lee	Tillis
Daines	McCain	Toomey
Enzi	McConnell	Wicker

NAYS—48

Baldwin	Feinstein	Merkley
Bennet	Franken	Mikulski
Blumenthal	Gillibrand	Murphy
Booker	Heinrich	Murray
Boxer	Heitkamp	Nelson
Brown	Hirono	Paul
Cantwell	Kaine	Peters
Cardin	King	Reed
Carper	Klobuchar	Reid
Casey	Leahy	Sanders
Coons	Manchin	Schatz
Cruz	Markey	Schumer
Donnelly	McCaskill	Shaheen
Durbin	Menendez	Stabenow

Tester
Udall

Warner
Warren

Whitehouse
Wyden

Udall
Warner

Warren
Whitehouse

Wicker
Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Vitter

The conference report was agreed to.
The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

PROVIDING FOR CONGRESSIONAL DISAPPROVAL OF A RULE SUB- MITTED BY THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD— VETO

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Chair lay before the Senate the veto message to accompany S.J. Res. 8.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the veto message.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Veto message to accompany S.J. Res. 8, a joint resolution providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the National Labor Relations Board relating to representation case procedures.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to table the veto message to accompany S.J. Res. 8, and ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DAINES). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 96, nays 3, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 172 Leg.]

YEAS—96

Alexander	Feinstein	Murkowski
Ayotte	Fischer	Murphy
Baldwin	Flake	Murray
Barrasso	Franken	Nelson
Bennet	Gardner	Paul
Blumenthal	Gillibrand	Perdue
Blunt	Graham	Peters
Booker	Hatch	Portman
Boozman	Heinrich	Reed
Boxer	Heitkamp	Reid
Brown	Heller	Risch
Burr	Hirono	Roberts
Cantwell	Hoeven	Rounds
Capito	Inhofe	Rubio
Cardin	Isakson	Sanders
Carper	Johnson	Sasse
Casey	Kaine	Schatz
Cassidy	King	Schumer
Coats	Kirk	Scott
Cochran	Klobuchar	Sessions
Collins	Lankford	Shaheen
Coons	Leahy	Shelby
Corker	Lee	Stabenow
Cornyn	Manchin	Sullivan
Cotton	Markey	Tester
Crapo	McCain	Thune
Daines	McCaskill	Tillis
Donnelly	McConnell	Toomey
Durbin	Menendez	
Enzi	Merkley	
Ernst	Mikulski	

NAYS—3

Grassley

Moran

NOT VOTING—1

Vitter

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIRE- FIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RE- SPONDERS ACT—Resumed

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, what is the pending business before the Senate?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The pending business is H.R. 1191, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1191) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Pending:

Corker/Cardin amendment No. 1140, in the nature of a substitute.

Corker/Cardin amendment No. 1179 (to amendment No. 1140), to require submission of all Persian text included in the agreement.

Blunt amendment No. 1155 (to amendment No. 1140), to extend the requirement for annual Department of Defense reports on the military power of Iran.

Vitter modified amendment No. 1186 (to amendment No. 1179), to require an assessment of inadequacies in the international monitoring and verification system as they relate to a nuclear agreement with Iran.

Cotton amendment No. 1197 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 1140), of a perfecting nature.

Cotton (for Rubio) amendment No. 1198 (to amendment No. 1197), to require a certification that Iran's leaders have publically accepted Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the Corker amendment No. 1140 to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the Corker amendment No. 1140 to H.R. 1191, an act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Mitch McConnell, Bob Corker, Joni Ernst, Rob Portman, Johnny Isakson, Shelley Moore Capito, Thad Cochran, Orrin G. Hatch, David Perdue, Daniel Coats, Jeff Flake, Kelly Ayotte, Cory Gardner, John Hoeven, Roger F. Wicker, John Thune, John Cornyn.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to H.R. 1191 to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on H.R. 1191, an act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Mitch McConnell, Bob Corker, Joni Ernst, Rob Portman, Johnny Isakson, Shelley Moore Capito, Thad Cochran, Orrin G. Hatch, David Perdue, Daniel Coats, Jeff Flake, Kelly Ayotte, Cory Gardner, John Hoeven, Roger F. Wicker, John Thune, John Cornyn.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorums required under rule XXII be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Iowa.

U.S. MARSHALS SERVICE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the U.S. Marshals Service performs many important functions. Marshals protect Federal judges, they transport Federal prisoners, and they apprehend fugitives. The marshals operate the Witness Security Program, and they manage the Asset Forfeiture Program. The work is vital and sometimes even dangerous.

Given the important nature of the work, it is all the more essential that its leaders carry out their mission with integrity and openness. Unfortunately, the evidence suggests that there are serious questions about the leadership of the Marshals Service. The growing number of allegations brought to my office by whistleblowers is very alarming. It suggests there may be a pattern of mismanagement.

In several letters to the Justice Department, I have asked about multiple personnel actions allegedly driven by favoritism rather than merit.

The first example involves the Director of the U.S. Marshals Service, Stacia Hylton. In September 2011, Director Hylton sent an email from her personal email address to Kimberly Beal. At the time, Beal was the Deputy